5-13-2016

"More than Just a Teacher": Anticipatory Advocacy as Vision and Defense in Urban High-need Schools

Kim Stevens Barker
Georgia State University

ACCEPTANCE

This dissertation, "MORE THAN JUST A TEACHER": ANTICIPATORY ADVOCACY AS VISION AND DEFENSE IN URBAN HIGH-NEED SCHOOLS, by KIM STEVENS BARKER, was prepared under the direction of the candidate's Dissertation Advisory Committee. It is accepted by the committee members in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree, Doctor of Philosophy, in the College of Education and Human Development, Georgia State University.

The Dissertation Advisory Committee and the student's Department Chairperson, as representatives of the faculty, certify that this dissertation has met all standards of excellence and scholarship as determined by the faculty.

_____
Joyce Many, Ph.D.
Committee Chair

_____
Philo A. Hutcheson, Ph.D.
Committee Member

_____
Laura May, Ph.D.
Committee Member

_____
Diane Truscott, Ph.D.
Committee Member

_____
Date

_____
Gertrude Tinker Sachs, Ph.D.
Chairperson, Department of Middle and Secondary Education

_____
Paul A. Alberto, Ph.D.
Dean, College of Education and Human Development

AUTHOR'S STATEMENT

By presenting this dissertation as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for the advanced degree from Georgia State University, I agree that the library of Georgia State University shall make it available for inspection and circulation in accordance with its regulations governing materials of this type. I agree that permission to quote, to copy from, or to publish this dissertation may be granted by the professor under whose direction it was written, by the College of Education and Human Development's Director of Graduate Studies, or by me. Such quoting, copying, or publishing must be solely for scholarly purposes and will not involve potential financial gain. It is understood that any copying from or publication of this dissertation which involves potential financial gain will not be allowed without my written permission.

_____

Kim Stevens Barker

NOTICE TO BORROWERS

All dissertations deposited in the Georgia State University library must be used in accordance with the stipulations prescribed by the author in the preceding statement. The author of this dissertation is:

Kim Stevens Barker
Department of Middle and Secondary Education
College of Education and Human Development
Georgia State University

The director of this dissertation is:

Dr. Joyce Many
Department of Middle and Secondary Education
College of Education and Human Development
Georgia State University
Atlanta, GA 30303

CURRICULUM VITAE

Kim Stevens Barker

ADDRESS: 4895 Day Lily Way
Acworth, GA 30102

EDUCATION:

Ph.D.	2016	Georgia State University Teaching and Learning
M.Ed.	2006	Georgia State University Reading/Language & Literacy
B.A.	1996	Berry College English and Spanish

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

2013-present	Quality Instruction for English Learners (QuIEL) Grant – Project Coordinator Georgia State University
2003-2013	ESOL Teacher Cobb County School District
1987-1992	Senior Communications Specialist Southern Natural Gas Company

PUBLICATIONS:

Barker, K. S. (2013). Innovative ideas for tutoring and mentoring young English learners. In G. Onchwari & J. Keengwe (Eds.), *Cross-cultural considerations in the education of young immigrant learners* (pp. 17-31). Hershey, PA: IGI Global.

Barker, K. S. (2006). Literature circles: Implementing a rich strategy for English language learners. *Online Journal of The University System of Georgia Reading Consortium: Literacy Lens 5, 1-9*.

PRESENTATIONS:

Barker, K. S. (2016, April). *Standing ground in urban schools: Anticipatory advocacy as vision and defense for effective teachers.* American Educational Research Association Annual Conference, Washington, D.C.

Barker, K. S. (2016, April). *Teaching them to speak their minds: Ambitious teaching as advocacy in one urban school*. American Educational Research Association Annual Conference, Washington, D.C.

Schafer, N.J. & **Barker, K. S.** (2016, April). *Responsive classroom management: Empowering students and teachers in urban schools.* American Educational Research Association Annual Conference, Washington, D.C.

Barker, K. S. (2015, October). *Redefining the schoolteacher: Learning from effective teachers working in urban high-need schools.* American Association for Teaching and Curriculum Annual Conference, Portland, ME.

Barker, K. S., May, L., Truscott, D., Couch, C., & Bernal, C. (2015, March). *Exploring paths and leaving trails: Strengthening writing instructions for English learners through collaborative inquiry*. National Professional Development School Conference, Atlanta, GA.

May, L., **Barker, K. S.,** & Truscott, D. (2014, November). *Making literacy practices matter: Stories of change in the early childhood classroom.* Paper presented at the annual convention of the National Council for Teachers of English, Washington, DC.

Bhatnagar, R., Kim, J., **Barker, K. S.,** Tanguay, C., Ball, M., & Many, J. (2014, April). *Learning from stakeholders' perceptions of teacher preparation: Using latent class modeling in program evaluation*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Philadelphia, PA.

Barker, K. S., Bhatnagar, R., Many, J. (2013, April). *Preparing teachers for urban schools in the 21st century: A review of the literature.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, CA.

Barker, K. S. & Stevens Barker, N.J. (2013, March). "*Entitled to receive education": Community support in achieving educational equity.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Committee on Teaching about the United Nations, Atlanta, GA.

PROFESSIONAL SOCIETIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

2012-Present	American Educational Research Association
2012-Present	Georgia Association of Teacher Educators
2011-Present	Georgia Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages
2013-Present	National Association of Multicultural Educators
2013-Present	National Council of Teachers of English

“MORE THAN JUST A TEACHER”: ANTICIPATORY ADVOCACY AS VISION AND DEFENSE IN URBAN HIGH-NEED SCHOOLS

by

KIM STEVENS BARKER

Under the Direction of Dr. Joyce Many

ABSTRACT

Specialized teacher preparation programs are graduating teachers with commitments to advocacy. This expanded definition of teaching stands in opposition to traditional expectations for the role of teachers that have developed during the history of U.S. education into organizational and social frames that reinforce tradition and work against reform. These influences constitute forces of professional weathering that may wear down teachers’ visions and actions for their work. This multicase study focused on four graduates from an intensive two-year teacher preparation program that included initial certification along with induction support in the second year of the program as they completed master’s degree requirements. The inquiry sought to understand how they envisioned their roles as teacher advocates and how they enacted and sustained their visions, resisting traditional teacher roles.

Participants were graduates of the same cohort of the preparation program who were completing their second year of teaching in urban high-need schools and who had been nominated and confirmed as effective teachers of diverse students by faculty members of the

university program and of local schools. Program materials were analyzed as background material to establish context. Primary data that were inductively and iteratively analyzed included extant course assignments, three individual interviews with each participant, three school-related observations, and three focus group interviews.

Findings provide insight into the ways in which the teachers enacted a vision of anticipatory advocacy. Anticpatory advocacy includes intervening actions that are the result of a dual awareness of students' immediate and future needs and have implications beyond boundaries of time and space in an effort to positively influence students' lives in the immediate as well as distant future. The teachers, each of whom held beliefs that aligned with the culturally relevant foundations of the program prior to their selection, employed tools related to responsive classroom management, ambitious teaching strategies, and professional collaboration that they acquired and honed during their program. By working backward from the classrooms of effective teachers, the study links classroom practices with teacher preparation, providing direction for stakeholders concerned with the development and retention of high quality teachers for all children, especially in challenging school contexts.

INDEX WORDS: Anticipatory advocacy, Visioning, Culturally relevant pedagogy, Urban education, Diverse students, Novice teachers, Teacher education, Classroom management, Ambitious teaching, Professional weathering

“MORE THAN JUST A TEACHER”: ANTICIPATORY ADVOCACY AS VISION AND DEFENSE IN URBAN HIGH-NEED SCHOOLS

by

Kim Stevens Barker

A Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for the

Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Teaching and Learning

in

the Department of Middle and Secondary Education

in

the College of Education and Human Development

Georgia State University

Atlanta, GA
2016

DEDICATION

For the children of

Chalker Elementary School

who taught me as much as I taught them

and for my own children,

Nicholas, Steven, and Katherine,

who are my joy and inspiration.

In memory of my brother,

John Patrick Stevens
1968 -- 2014

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Someone told me early on that the Ph.D. journey was a lonely endeavor and to be prepared to spend a great deal of time alone—reading, writing, and thinking. To a certain extent this has been true for me, but to an even greater degree, this journey has become a hopeful adventure overflowing with amazing people, new friends and old, and new places, new activities, and a long list of possibilities for the next phase. I am grateful for a host of good people who have been with me along the way.

The women who participated in this study represent the kinds of teachers that we all want for our children: intelligent, dedicated, energetic, and fiercely loving. They have my deep admiration and humble gratitude for generously sharing their time and their lives to create what they called a "message in a bottle," sharing their experiences and reflections from the heart of their classrooms where day after day challenges abound. Thank you, Susie, Michelle, Lola, and Jordan!

My mentors and colleagues are teachers first, and I am ever thankful for their shining examples and unwavering support and confidence. Joyce Many, my dissertation chair, convinced me to come to Georgia State twice, first for teacher certification and Master's and later for the doctoral program. I am so thankful for those decisions, for her confidence in me, and for the opportunity to work with her. She is a role model to me as a professor, a scholar, and a human being! Thank you, Joyce, for sharing your brilliance and kindness with me!

Another group of amazing people with whom I have had the honor to work is my dissertation committee. Thank you, Philo Hutcheson, Laura May, and Diane Truscott, for the incalculable ways you supported me from my earliest ideas for the study to the final draft of the manuscript. Also, I deeply appreciate the generosity of Nancy Schafer who shared her time and

expertise on classroom management as my findings emerged, and of Carla Tanguay who offered valuable insight on the study. Alyssa Hadley Dunn also served on my comprehensive exam committee and graciously offered support and mentoring in a variety of ways throughout my program. Thank you, Alyssa! Finally, Gertrude Tinker Sachs was an early and consistent voice of encouragement in my language and literacy work, and I appreciate her leadership and smile. Along with Joyce, these are the people who challenged me and taught me how to be "more than just a teacher" by their own examples. I am eternally grateful for each of you.

The UACM Program and the department of Early Childhood and Elementary Education have become my home at GSU, and I appreciate each and every one of you. I have gained so much, professionally and personally, from being in your company. What a joy to be part of a community of believers!

Providence has made my journey rich with support from a variety of people who never stopped believing in me and who stepped in to support me in all sorts of ways at just the right moments. You walked with me, called, texted, listened, encouraged, held my hand, cleaned and cooked for me, talked and kept silent, read, edited, and even coaxed me from the abyss once upon a time. You know who you are. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

I owe a special thank you to Dr. Beverly Armento for honoring me with the Beverly Armento Endowed Doctoral Award, and to Dr. Lucille Welzant Hayden and the late Dr. Melvin Hayden for honoring me with the Hayden-Waltz Doctoral Dissertation Award. I appreciate your commitment to research on teaching and learning, and I am profoundly grateful for your confidence in my research for teachers and students. Your financial support enabled me to conduct the rigorous study that I envisioned.

Finally, home is where we begin, and I am grateful most of all for the love and support of my parents, Pat and Loretta Stevens, who are my solid rocks, and of my sister, Allena, her family, Peter and August. My own children, Nicholas, Steven, and Katherine, are my inspiration, my joy, my hope, and my friends. I am eternally grateful for their patience and enthusiasm for my work. I love you all.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

English Learners (ELs)

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

Georgia State University (GSU)

Historically Black College and University (HBCU)

Kindergarten through 12th grade (K-12)

Response to Intervention (RTI)

Science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM)

Urban Accelerated Certification and Master's (UACM)

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

One place comprehended can make us understand other places better.
Sense of place gives equilibrium; extended, it is sense of direction too.
Welty, 1957

Urban schools are places characterized by complexity and challenge. Preparing teachers for these unique places requires attention to context, a sense of direction. Much of the complexity and many of the challenges related to urban schools are the result of the interplay of racial, cultural, economic, and linguistic diversity between and among students, teachers, and communities. Thirty percent of K-12 students, about 15 million children, attend schools in urban areas in the United States, and half of the urban schools they attend are considered high-poverty schools, or schools where more than 75 percent of the students are eligible for free and reduced lunch.

Adding to the contextual complexity is the fact that urban schools educate about one third of all students of color in the U.S., one-third of all poor students, and twice as many English learners (ELs) as other schools in the nation (Council of the Great City Schools, 2014). Children of color are more likely to live in poverty, and an educational achievement gap is evident across races, socioeconomic levels, and language proficiency. The persistence of the achievement gap between children from diverse backgrounds and White children, the dominant culture, has fueled decades of research on preparing teachers for effective practice. Culturally relevant practices that include commitments to advocacy for all aspects of children's lives have proven to be effective with diverse students (Grant & Agosto, 2011; Irvine, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995). Urban-focused teacher preparation programs are producing teachers who are committed to culturally relevant practice, including acting as advocates for their students' academic and personal welfare

within and outside of their school contexts, positioning them as educators whose roles as teachers are expanded from traditional teacher roles in the U.S.

While specialized teacher preparation programs are graduating teachers with commitments to advocacy, this expanded definition of teaching as inclusive of advocacy work stands in opposition to traditional expectations for the role of teachers that have developed from historical, contextual, and social events and influences in the United States. These influences constitute forces of professional weathering, pressures inherent to the organization of schooling that may wear down teachers' visions and actions for their work as teacher advocates. The research base on preparing teachers for diverse learners has focused largely on results achieved during preparation and induction, leaving questions unanswered about the sustainability of the influence of their preparation in urban contexts beyond initial teacher preparation and into induction. Understanding how four effective teachers working with diverse students in urban contexts were able to enact and sustain their visions as advocates illuminated ways in which their specialized teacher preparation equipped them for their work.

Urban Schools and Teacher Preparation

A limited number of colleges of education have responded to the special needs of diverse students and the staffing needs of urban schools by offering urban-focused professional development school partnerships designed to recruit and prepare teachers who have the knowledge and skills to support culturally and linguistically diverse students and who are dedicated to persevere in urban contexts (Abdal-Haqq, 1999; Burstein, Czeck, Kretschmer, Lombardi, & Smith, 2009; Hammerness & Matsko, 2013; Matsko & Hammerness, 2014; Quartz et al., 2003; Tamir, 2010). Often grounded in culturally relevant ideals, these teacher preparation programs are designed to produce teachers who resist and rise above traditional role expectations

for teachers as they enact cultural competence and maintain a critical stance towards social structures that impact their work and their students' achievement (Burstein et al., 2009; Cochran-Smith, 1991; Ensign, 2009; Garcia, Arias, Murri, & Serna, 2010; Milner, 2010; Murrell, 2000). Designed to actively integrate theoretical with practical perspectives and experiences between the university and local schools, the programs provide candidates with early and ongoing teaching experiences in high-need schools (Anderson & Olsen, 2006; Zeichner, 2010). Support systems comprised of university faculty members, mentor teachers, school administrators, and boundary spanners (experts who have connections to and are able to negotiate both educational contexts) are important features of urban-focused professional development school partnerships (Burstein et al., 2009; Many, Fisher, Ogletree, & Taylor, 2012; Oakes, Franke, Quartz, & Rogers, 2002; Taymans, Tindle, Freund, Ortiz, & Harris, 2012; Truscott & Roden, 2006; Whipp, 2013; Zeichner, 2010).

Context of the Study

Georgia State University (GSU), a public research university located in Atlanta, GA, one of the ten largest cities in the United States, demonstrates its commitment to students of diverse backgrounds, leading the state in undergraduate and graduate degrees awarded to students of color ("A Public Research University," n.d.). Ranking in the top 20 nationwide for undergraduate and graduate degrees in education for students of color, the institution's College of Education and Human Development works closely with surrounding school districts, an educational environment that ranks as *urban intensive* according to Milner's conceptual framework for urban educational environments ("Highlights & Rankings," n.d.; Milner, 2012). With a metropolitan population more than five times Milner's urban intensive criteria of 1 million people, the city's surrounding districts are characterized by size and density as well as contextual challenges

related to socioeconomic disparities and rapidly increasing diversity. Sixty percent of K-12 students in the state live in low-income households, while 55% of children under the age of eight are living at 200% below the poverty level (Rickman, 2014). As the percentage of low-income students has increased by more than 15% in the last ten years, state funding for education has also declined by 15% due to budget shortfalls and declining property tax revenues (Rickman, 2014). Economic disadvantage is directly related to disparity in student achievement, and in this 10-county metropolitan region, the achievement gap is calculated at 38% between economically advantaged and disadvantaged students (Atlanta Regional Commission Report, 2014). Students of color have made up a majority of the state's K-12 population since 2010, and one in five of the state's youth are immigrants or have an immigrant parent (Hooker, Fix, & McHugh, 2014).

This school environment, like other urban-intensive school contexts, faces unique challenges resulting from layers of racial, linguistic, cultural, economic, and linguistic diversity between and among students, teachers, and communities. This interplay is so salient to teacher effectiveness and student achievement that it constitutes what has been termed the demographic imperative, a common concern for teacher educators and researchers who are committed to the task of preparing effective teachers of students in urban settings (Clayton, 2011; Garcia & Cuellar, 2006; Garcia et al., 2010; Goldenberg, 2014; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Murrell, 2000). Preparing teachers to be leaders, thinkers, and change agents who are equipped to address the challenges and complexities of high-need schools is a mission of the college's collaborative, multidisciplinary professional education faculty (Bhatnagar, Kim, & Many, 2014). More than 70% of graduates from GSU programs begin their careers teaching in high-need urban schools, and the three-year retention rate is 80%, compared to national retention rates for urban high need schools at 50% (Highlights & Rankings, n.d.).

Urban Accelerated Certification and Master's Program

One specialized program within GSU offers college graduates and career changers with a commitment to urban high-need schools an alternative route to PreK-5 certification. The Urban Accelerated Certification and Master's (UACM) program is a cohort-based, two-year six-semester program in which graduate students earn a teaching certificate (PreK-5th grade) and an English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) endorsement at the end of their first year of the program (47 credit hours) and a master's degree of education at the end of their second year of the program (30 additional credit hours) in the evenings. The program is grounded in the theory of culturally relevant pedagogy and includes intensive multicultural coursework beginning with the introductory course and woven throughout the program (Williams, May, & Williams, 2012) as recommended by Ladson-Billings (1994). Intense field experiences that rely on intentional collaborations among faculty members, teacher candidates, school-based mentor teachers, and school administrators are hallmarks of the UACM program. During the first year of the program, teacher candidates receive multiple opportunities to interact with children and families of diverse backgrounds. Candidates support ELs through literacy tutoring at a local refugee agency's summer camp as well as participate as interns in a summer science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) camp offered within a metro high-need district. Additionally, each teacher candidate has an eight-month student-teaching experience and a spring ESOL placement in a high-need urban public elementary school. During the second year of the program, UACM candidates become teachers-of-record in high-need urban schools.

While they are expected to demonstrate pedagogical competence in field experiences, these exemplary teachers are also prepared with the expectation that they will be empowered advocates and change agents inside and outside the classroom, promoting the success of their

culturally and linguistically diverse elementary students schooled in urban contexts through culturally relevant practice. In addition to believing that their students' academic excellence is nonnegotiable, these culturally relevant practitioners recognize and value their students' cultural assets. They seek not only to close the achievement gap, but also to actively work to eliminate it while continuing to question the causes of its existence (Young, 2010). UACM teachers are highly sought after by area principals, and they often accept job offers based on their field experience work in local schools before their certification is even complete. Ninety percent of UACM graduates accept positions in urban high-need schools, and the three-year retention rate for UACM graduates is 100% and 95% at five years past graduation (Program Document).

Clearly, UACM graduates are positioned and performing outside of the norm when it comes to their preparation for working with diverse students and their ability to persevere in challenging urban contexts. Not only are these teachers unique in their performance and perseverance within urban high-need schools, but also, they are distinctive in the historical and social context of public education of the United States that has led to the development and preservation of traditional societal norms regarding the roles of teachers. The organizational structure of schooling in the United States along with the demographic tradition of the profession and socialization pressures from within and outside of schools constitute professional weathering forces that have historically played a role in wearing down the resolve of teachers who seek to challenge old role expectations inherent in the system (Cuban, 2013; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Tyack, 1974; Tyack & Tobin, 1994).

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

The UACM program is grounded in the theory of culturally relevant pedagogy which, when introduced almost a quarter of a century ago, broadened expectations of the role of

effective teachers for diverse students to include acts of advocacy (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Ladson-Billings (1994) used the metaphor of a coach to describe three overarching priorities that culturally relevant teachers in her study embodied in their work that enabled them to make the most of their students' cultural assets for their learning. First, she argued such teachers see themselves and each of their students as fully capable of success in local and broad contexts, and they demand excellence. Second, she described teachers committed to culturally relevant practice as professionals who recognize and value all kinds of cultural assets, and who actively weave connections within the classroom, into the school building, and out into the school and community, in order to build learning communities that support their own effectiveness and their students' achievement. Finally, she argued teachers who are effective at culturally relevant practices reinforce curiosity and a love of learning among their students by building on students' background knowledge, by constructing solid foundations for new learning, and by joining with students as collaborative learners. Ladson-Billings categorized these priorities into three major domains teachers must have to be successful with culturally diverse students. These expectations were: 1) students must be successful academically; 2) students must maintain their own culture, while becoming proficient in other cultures; and 3) students must be aware of and empowered to challenge social and political forces around them (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Culturally relevant pedagogy is more than just "good teaching" for children of historically marginalized populations (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 159). This approach effectively builds bridges between the curriculum and students whose backgrounds are distinct from the dominant culture, unlocking doors to achievement that historically have been difficult to breach. Furthermore, identifying teaching practices that are effective with students who are often the least successful is likely to increase understandings about practices that will support all learners.

This approach is vital for all teachers in the United States who are likely to work with children from backgrounds differentiated not only by race, ethnicity, and language, but also by aspects of gender, religion, nationality, and socioeconomic status in urban as well as rural and suburban locations (Ladson-Billings, 2001, 2014; Jimerson, 2005; Monk, 2007; Zhao, 2010). Preparing teachers who can mitigate student differences and social and historical influences through high expectations, cultural competence, and sociopolitical consciousness, necessitates expectations for teachers that go beyond traditional teacher roles. To be effective teachers need to advocate for all stakeholders in their work and be prepared to resist and challenge the status quo in education (Grant & Agosto, 2011). Teaching in a culturally relevant manner is not accomplished by accident or by those with a weak understanding or wavering commitment to the challenges of a diverse classroom, since this kind of teaching stands in opposition to traditional views of teaching and learning (Morrison, Robbins, & Rose, 2008). Understanding the historical development of schooling and the continued interconnectivity of the social forces that have resulted from that history is foundational for teachers who can then be developed through thoughtful preparation to go beyond awareness to action as they resist pressures related to time, professional isolation, misinformation and resistance, and fatigue (Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

Research on Preparing Teachers for Diverse Students

Research on preparing teachers for work with diverse students in urban settings is largely focused on student teachers or first-year novice teachers, demonstrating positive shifts in individuals' attitudes and dispositions with little research linking teacher preparation with candidates' subsequent actual practice (Anderson & Stillman, 2013; Athanases & Martin, 2006; Sleeter & Owuor, 2011; Taymans et al., 2012; Zeichner, 2005). With half of all urban teachers abandoning the profession within the first three years, apparently the years beyond the first

induction year constitute a critical milestone, and research contributing to a knowledge base for preparing teachers for urban contexts is lacking overall (Wilson & Floden, 2003). Reviews of decades of teacher education literature call for research that takes a backward approach beginning with seasoned, effective teachers to uncover factors within their teacher preparation that contributed to their effective practices with diverse students (Clift & Brady, 2005; Gollnick, 1978; Grant & Gibson, 2011; Grossman et al., 2000; Hollins & Guzman, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2001; Milner, 2010; Sleeter & Owuor, 2011; Weiner, 2002).

Ladson-Billings (1995) argued that research conducted in the classrooms of exemplary practitioners within contexts frequently associated with failure should be foundational to a knowledge base for teacher preparation. Seeking out and listening to the voices of effective teachers on their own development and experiences would yield guidance and possibilities for teacher educators as well as the stakeholders they serve. This study contributed to the field by discovering how a group of effective teachers who envisioned their work as teacher advocates, enacted their beliefs, resisted contextual challenges, and sustained their visions beyond their first years of teaching.

My Journey to the Study

My desire to contribute to the work of preparing teachers who will actively advocate and push for positive change in education for diverse students is rooted in my work as a public school elementary ESOL teacher. Teaching was a second career for me, and I earned my certification in an intense 16-month master's and certification preparation program at the same urban research university where I eventually returned to work and earn my Ph.D. Graduate coursework within my preparation program including reading, ESOL instruction, linguistics, and urban field experiences from K-12th grades, equipped me with a wider range of conceptual

knowledge and classroom experience upon taking my first teaching position than was true for many of my colleagues. In addition, my preparation instilled in me the notion that work with EL students and their families included a responsibility to advocate and push for changes that would benefit the children I served.

As I threw myself into the work of serving an average of 65 K-5 EL students each year and collaborating with teachers and other school professionals who also served them, I had numerous opportunities to advocate and make changes in my school context. During those years my email signature was followed by a quote from Picasso, “Others see what is and ask why. I see what could be and ask why not?” Only limited by my own time constraints and energy, I saw my work as a teacher as full of possibility, and I reached out into the school and community to collaborate with as many stakeholders as possible. My stakeholder group included other teachers, administrators, and family and community members, and we accomplished a great deal together during my nine years in the classroom. Our EL students benefited from a change in English instruction from a model of school wide, pullout instruction to a push-in, sheltered instruction model. Classroom teachers and I grew together in our work. We delivered presentations on our experiences using technology for collaboration and instruction with ELs, and along with a group of high school volunteers we presented on community partnerships at local and state conferences. Classroom teachers at each grade level earned their ESOL endorsements, drawing on our work together to complete course assignments and assessments. Students and teachers from our local high school and I organized a tutoring and mentoring program on Sunday afternoons that matched high school volunteers with EL students to work on homework and class projects and to spend time playing and building community (Stevens Barker, 2014). Not only did EL students demonstrate academic achievement through their classroom performance,

participation, and test scores, but they also grew as a group in visibility and participation in the school and local community. For the first time EL students began to take part in school-wide reading, spelling, and geography competitions, to take grant-supported field trips tailored for ELs, and to appear with their families at special school events for ESOL students and their families. Family members learned that they had choices and power when it came to their children's education, and they expressed their desires and demanded answers when they had questions.

My work as a teacher advocate was a joy for me, and although I was often able to draw others into the milieu of my work, I was aware of colleagues who stood at a distance. We watched each other warily, wondering what made the other tick. While they might offer encouragement or appreciation for the work we were doing with our EL students, they expressed their own feelings of inadequacy to actively work for advocacy or change. It was as if an invisible force tied their hands.

It was at this point in time that I decided to return to the university to continue my own education. Early coursework in my Ph.D. program was foundational in my development as it deepened my understandings of my own preconceptions as a White woman who continues to be privileged due to my race and upbringing and of the need for effective teachers to be aware and to be culturally responsive to differences in their learners. This deep appreciation of diversity added to knowledge I gained in historical and social foundations of education courses merged into a realization that was profound yet disturbing for me. The professional ennui I had observed in many of my colleagues has been observed in sociological studies of teachers for generations, and it emerged from seemingly irresistible contextual forces that worked to maintain the status quo despite monumental efforts to reform education, even efforts to improve teacher education.

While I was increasingly identifying with and pursuing a teacher identity that resembled John Dewey's progressive model for teaching, I realized that colleagues who took a more traditional approach outnumbered me (Dewey, 1938/1997). Willard Waller (1932) studied the sociology of teachers, and his research question, "What does teaching do to teachers?" haunted me (p. 375). I wondered if and how the question applied in the 21st century.

Shortly after I began to grapple with the dismal reality that the work of teaching was a phenomenon that acted as a force of professional weathering, I left my job as a teacher and took a full-time position as a grant project coordinator for the urban teacher preparation program in which I conducted this study. Due to wide-ranging responsibilities and opportunities related to my position, I worked with candidates and graduates of the program in various educational and school contexts. I had a thorough understanding of the program's theoretical foundation, design, and goals. I observed that graduates of the program were respected within schools and districts, and they were persevering in urban high-need schools, somehow defying the forces of professional weathering. Still resisting the notion that the negative effects of the work of teaching were more powerful than specialized and rigorous teacher preparation, I became curious to see how a group of effective teachers prepared for teaching in a program centered within a framework of cultural relevance have developed into and sustained their work as teacher advocates. The history of teaching in the United States indicated that teacher preparation could not be powerful enough to overcome the social, historical, and contextual forces that had constructed and continued to preserve traditional teacher roles, but I asked, "Why not?" An important question for those seeking to become, to hire, and to educate effective teachers for all children is, "What can specialized and rigorous teacher preparation do for teachers to combat

weathering effects of the system of schooling on their visions and enactments of their work as advocates for the children they teach?"

Research Questions

I posed the following research questions to guide my inquiry into the work of a group of teachers who strove to be effective advocates for diverse students in high-need urban elementary classrooms:

1. How do effective teachers, who were prepared in a program centered within a framework of cultural relevance, envision their roles as advocates?
2. How do effective teachers, who were prepared in a program centered within a framework of cultural relevance, enact their visions as advocates?
3. How do effective teachers, who were prepared in a program centered within a framework of cultural relevance, resist traditional teacher roles and sustain their own evolving visions as advocates?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the development and work of effective, established teacher graduates who were working in urban elementary classrooms to understand the role that their teacher preparation program played in their visions and enactments of advocacy. Understanding how the teachers enacted their visions for themselves in their classrooms and school contexts provided examples of practices that may result from specialized teacher education and that are also effective for students' learning (Hammerness, 2001; Castro, 2014). In addition, understanding how these teachers resisted traditional teacher roles while also sustaining their vision for themselves as culturally relevant educators as a result of their specialized

preparation adds to the research base in the area of teacher education related to preparing teachers for culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms.

Significance of the Study

The preparation of effective teachers for work with diverse students and to be committed to urban contexts is an ongoing challenge for colleges of education throughout the country and a critical need for urban district stakeholders. Research on teacher preparation efforts in the United States for diverse students has been limited largely to demonstrating success at nudging teacher candidates toward awareness of diversity issues (Athanases & Martin, 2006; Furman, 2008; Grant & Gibson, 2011; Hollins & Guzman, 2005; Howard & Aleman, 2011). Continued calls for research on effective teachers who stayed in urban high-need schools beyond the preservice program and initial year of their induction period emphasize the need to determine how their preparation work equipped them with the tenacity to move from awareness to action as advocates for their students, to resist professional weathering forces, and to sustain their vision of themselves as teachers (Anderson & Stillman, 2013; Grant & Gillette, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Milner, 2010; Taymans et al., 2012; Weiner, 2002). By focusing in depth on a small group of effective urban teachers, this study worked backwards from teachers' practices into the ways in which their teacher education program influenced their work, an approach used and recommended by scholars in the field of teacher education (Haberman, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Milner, 2010; Sleeter, 2001). In the current social and political climate, where the value of university teacher education is questioned and undermined, where teachers are under attack for failures in the public school system, and where diverse children continue to be marginalized by the system, uncovering sources of excellence in urban teaching is of vital importance (Dunn, 2014; Grossman, 2008; Kumashiro, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Weiner, 2000, 2002; Zeichner,

2010, 2013, 2014). Focusing on atypical cases (e.g., effective urban teachers and a specialized teacher preparation program with exceptional results) contributed new knowledge that is helpful for practice and further research (Riessman, 2008). Ladson-Billings (1995) argued that this kind of study should be replicated time and again to increase understandings for effective practice and the role of preparation in the work of teachers of diverse students.

Assumptions and Limitations

One assumption I made as I began this study was that the participants would be willing to thoughtfully and truthfully engage in prolonged discussions about their preparation for teaching and their teaching practices, as well as to allow me to observe them in their classrooms and in other situations related to their work. The classroom has been called a *black box* by writers in the field of education because of its often impenetrable nature and vital importance (Cuban, 2013; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Taymans et al., 2012). I asked teachers with reputations as strong educators to open their classrooms, their school contexts, and their own professional development to observation and scrutiny. I assumed that they would be forthright in their participation. A limitation of this assumption is the fact that the participants had the freedom to self-select representative artifacts for the initial interview, select and schedule their school-related observations, and answer interview and focus group questions at their discretion. These freedoms may have given the participants opportunities to influence the findings in ways that highlighted or shielded their own practices from view.

Also, my position as both researcher and staff member of the UACM program constituted both a limitation and a benefit. Since my involvement with the program began after these participants received their certification, and my contact with the group was limited, it is likely that I was etic from their perspective; however, my knowledge of the program and the faculty,

made me emic to elements of the research context. In addition, I expect that as a veteran elementary school teacher for ELs, I had a foundation on which to build trust and communication with my participants. For naturalistic researchers the influence of values on research is recognized as not only inevitable, but also desirable, and rather than attempt to achieve or portray pure neutrality, I reflected on and interrogated my own subjectivities within the study, so that I could focus on the credibility of the data itself (Bailey, 2007). I used a reflexive journal to document my thinking, procedures, and progress throughout the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A tool that facilitated peer debriefing and audits, my reflexive journal addressed credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability within the study, four goals that are important for establishing trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Overview of the Study

This study took place in the Atlanta metropolitan area, one of the ten largest cities in the United States, a region characterized by size and density as well as socioeconomic disparities and rapidly increasing diversity that complicate the task of educating the state's diverse K-12 student population. Because I was seeking to understand how teachers who were prepared within a specialized teacher preparation program envisioned, enacted, and sustained their roles as teacher advocates, I employed a process of case study. Learning to teach and developing as a teacher in the early years of a career is a complicated process that includes the interaction of numerous significant factors including individual contextual conditions, a phenomenon that Yin (2009) argues is best understood through the use of the case study strategy. In order to understand how effective teachers were influenced by their teacher preparation program within different environments, I included multiple cases within the design of the study (Stake, 2006).

This multicase study consisted of four cases that explored the ways the teachers who were recognized as effective in their work with diverse students in urban school contexts envisioned and enacted advocacy as part of their role as teachers, and how they resisted professional weathering and sustained their work. The teachers, all teaching in urban high-need schools, were graduates of the UACM program. Situated within Ladson-Billings' (1994) theory of culturally relevant pedagogy and informed by literature on the ways that teachers' visions for their work determines their roles (Hammerness, 2006, 2008) and by sociological studies that describe the effects of social and historical forces that may weather teachers' visions, this explanatory study included document analysis, interviews, participant observations, and focus-group discussions. Background materials related to the period of time in which the participants participated in the UACM program were analyzed in order to understand the participants' beliefs and attitudes about teaching and learning prior to entering the UACM program. These materials included program interview questionnaires and notes, resumes, writing prompts, nomination survey data, and course documents and assignments. Primary data collected and analyzed for this study included the participants' culminating master's degree assignment, a video capstone project, transcripts of three individual interviews with each participant, field notes from three scheduled school-related observations, and transcripts of three focus group interviews.

In order to address my research questions, I purposefully selected teacher graduates of the UACM program who were completing their second year after initial certification as teachers of record in urban high-need schools and who were nominated and confirmed to be effective teachers of diverse students by stakeholders within the UACM program and the local schools. Using elements of Ladson-Billings (1994) process of *community nomination*, I initiated the selection process by seeking recommendations of program faculty members and university

supervisors and then crosschecking the nominations for agreement from the teachers' school principals before contacting the potential participants. Once participants were recruited, I conducted document analysis using relevant program documents as background data including the participants' capstone projects (culminating multimedia assignments from their master's coursework) as primary data sources. During the initial interviews I asked the participants to watch their capstone videos with me as stimuli for recalling their early visions for their work as effective teachers and to share self-selected artifacts that demonstrated their visions for themselves as teacher advocates. After analyzing the interviews, I conducted three separate scheduled classroom observations in order to familiarize myself with the participants' practices and school contexts. The first observation was a full-day observation, and analysis of that visit informed my inquiry in the follow-up individual interview. The two additional observations were events during school or at some other school-related activity that the participants selected based on their perception that the events demonstrated their work as effective teacher advocates. Those observations were followed by the third interview. I conducted two focus group meetings with the group in order to understand instances of advocacy that occurred around spring standardized testing and end-of-year activities. Analysis of the first two focus groups and the interviews informed my questioning for the final focus group interview. The final focus group interview addressed the research question related to resisting traditional teacher roles and sustaining practices as advocates. It was also an opportunity for all of the participants to come together to review initial results of the data analysis for accuracy and to contribute to revision and additional interpretations (Stake, 2006). Interviews and focus group meetings were recorded and transcribed, and each participant had an opportunity to review and to change her transcripts and individual findings. I used a reflexive journal to document my thinking, procedures, and progress

throughout the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This tool was important in addressing trustworthiness in my study, and it was useful for reflexive thinking, peer debriefing, and audits.

Data analysis for each case began with initial or open coding so that I became deeply familiar with the data and gained insights into possibilities for proceeding as the study developed (Saldaña, 2013). I proceeded with the analysis with a recursive, generative process, using inductive analysis at each stage of data collection to guide my inquiry into the next stage. Analytic memos further informed my analysis, and they were included within my reflexive journal (Creswell, 2013; Saldaña, 2013). I analyzed the data collected for the cases individually in order to understand each teacher and context. Finally, I analyzed across cases to uncover similarities and differences between cases, to understand the role of contextual factors in the work of the teachers, and to discover themes that represented their visions and work as advocates as well as the ways they resisted professional weathering forces and sustained their work. While I began using nVivo as a tool for organization, storage, and analysis of the data, I soon found that the large quantity of data made the technological tool cumbersome for my purposes. After some experimentation with the program, I decided to code the participant data manually, feeling that the process allowed me to stay close to the individuals and their thoughts.

Definitions

The research questions that guided this study were centered on the work of *effective teachers* of *diverse students* and *visions* they had for themselves as teacher *advocates* and *culturally relevant* practitioners. Since measures of teacher effectiveness and the notion of student diversity and culture are widely debated and variously constructed, and the research base on teacher education uses terms related to vision and advocacy in inconsistent ways, clarification of each of these terms was necessary. I relied on the following definitions within this study:

Culture

The concept of culture is complex and variously constructed depending on the perspective of the author. Within this study I relied on Ladson-Billings (2001) approach to culture as the layers of prior knowledge that each human being learns from living. She explained how culture informs without defining, "Human beings are complex. Our cultural affiliations are nested and multifaceted, and the cultural categories we use are crude approximations of individuals' cultures," (p. 98).

This broad definition of culture eliminates a superficial food and festivals approach that may have the unintended consequence of excluding rather than affirming diverse students. Ladson-Billings (2001, p. 100) explained,

> When a teacher uses a cultural event or activity to represent every member of that culture, she may be assuming cultural affiliations that students do not share. For example, a cultural event such as the African American holiday Kwanzaa may be as strange to African American children as it is to non-African American children. Asian American children may feel no affiliation with people and customs from specific Asian nations. Culturally relevant teachers know enough about the students they are teaching to help students make use of their multiple cultural identities. Those identities may span racial, ethnic, and national boundaries."

By expanding the concept of culture within this study to include layers of lived experiences, the culturally relevant practices of the participants come into focus.

Diverse students

Diversity is a concept that relies on perspective for its definition. Simply defined as *difference,* the question remains, "Different from whom?" Within the context of this study, diverse students referred to those students who are outside of the racial, cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic categories from which the majority of teachers in the U.S originate. The immediate racial, cultural, and linguistic mismatch is apparent when one contrasts the demographics of the teaching population with the makeup of the student population. While 83%

of all teachers in the United States identify themselves as non-Hispanic, White middle-class females, 20% of the children in the United States have at least one foreign-born parent, the percentage of children of color is expected to reach 45% by 2025, and 88% of schools with highly diverse populations have more than 50% of students receiving free and reduced lunch, (Clayton, 2010; Garcia et al., 2010; Goldenberg, 2014). Diversity within this study was defined from the perspective of difference from the dominant demographics of the teaching force in the United States at the time the study was conducted.

Effective Teachers

Within the context of this study *effective teachers* were identified within the framework of culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1994). My intent was to focus on the work of excellent teachers from the perspective of this framework, since culturally relevant teaching is the stated expectation of the UACM program from which these teachers graduated. Furthermore, concentrating on the broader framework gave me the freedom to account for individual teaching styles and the varied ways in which the teachers grounded their work in culturally relevant ideals. Ladson-Billings (2001) argued that effective teaching is less dependent on what teachers *do* than on how teachers *think*— "about the social contexts, about the students, about the curriculum, and about instruction" (p. 34). These thoughts emerge from three major domains evident in the work of effective urban teachers and she argues these domains reflect the expectations teachers must have to be successful with culturally diverse students. These expectations are: 1) students must be successful academically; 2) students must maintain their own culture while becoming proficient in other cultures; and 3) students must be aware of and empowered to challenge social and political forces around them (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Preparing culturally relevant teachers who can mitigate student differences and social and historical influences through high expectations, cultural competence, and sociopolitical consciousness, necessitates expectations for teachers that go beyond traditional teacher roles. To be effective they need to advocate for all stakeholders in their work and be prepared to resist and challenge the status quo in education (Grant & Agosto, 2011; Taymans et al., 2012). Oakes et al. (2002) argued that effective urban teachers must take on roles as advocates and change agents in addition to possessing strong pedagogical skills, labeling the additional aspects of their work as *expanded competencies*. The mission of the UACM program is for teacher graduates "to be empowered advocates and change agents inside and outside the classroom, promoting the success of their culturally and linguistically diverse elementary students schooled in urban contexts through culturally relevant practice," and this goal served as a benchmark of defining the concept of effective teaching within this study (UACM website).

Advocacy

Culturally relevant teachers are focused on the success of their students, demanding academic excellence from them, valuing their cultures, and leading them toward social and political empowerment, all goals that are inherent to equitable education (Ladson-Billings, 1994). This kind of student focus that includes care and justice situates the work of teaching solidly within moral practice (Noddings, 1988). In order to be effective with diverse students in urban contexts, teachers must be aware of instances within and outside of school that may impact the successes of their students, be knowledgeable about ways to intervene, and be willing to take action on behalf of their students' best interests. Within this study, advocacy referred to actions taken on behalf of students for the purpose of protecting and enhancing their educational experience, and the phrase, *teacher advocates*, referred to teachers who intentionally adopted a

readiness to take action on behalf of students as a professional expectation. Specific instances of advocacy varied with each participant, but they were identifiable by their potential to positively impact the success of diverse students.

Professional Weathering

While increasing diversity in schools has important implications for effective teacher preparation and practices beyond classroom skills such as advocacy, traditional structures of organization and school routines, or the *grammar of schooling,* works as a counterforce to teacher educators' and teachers' best efforts (Tyack & Tobin, 1994). History supports the fact that most attempts to go against tradition in schools are eventually overcome, or at least altered considerably, as institutional forces related to historical, contextual, and social realities, change attempts at reform. Within this study, I used the metaphor of the natural weathering process in the rock cycle to describe this phenomenon. While teacher educators and new teachers may have visions for teaching that includes culturally relevant practices, forces inherent to the organization of schooling may wear away at the edges of intention and action, such that over time, visions for culturally relevant practice are barely recognizable, if not completely chipped away, then perhaps smoothed and reduced in size.

The following chapter contains a review of research studies salient to teaching and teacher education for diverse students.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Teaching is some person teaching some thing to some student somewhere.
Jacqueline Jordan Irvine, 2003

To strengthen my understanding of concepts that were foundational to my research questions and to guide my inquiry into the work of a group of teachers who were effective advocates for diverse students in urban high-need elementary schools, I reviewed literature that was salient to teaching and teacher education for diverse students. The importance of diversity to teaching and learning in U.S. public schools cannot be overstated. The wide diversity of the K-5 student population juxtaposed with the relatively homogeneous teacher population is a phenomenon with major implications for teacher effectiveness and practice and, consequently, for student learning. As I reviewed literature related to diversity in education, I realized that the feminization of the teaching profession is particularly salient, not only as a factor in the equation that makes up the demographic imperative, but also as a contributing factor to the social and organizational forces that have limited teachers' efforts to enact their expanded visions for themselves as teachers. I address the development of the teaching profession as primarily a feminine endeavor first in the context of the demographic composition of teaching and learning in the United States of America. Later in the chapter, I return to the issue of the feminization of the teaching force to consider how it reinforces organizational and social constraints on teachers who would advocate for their students beyond their classrooms.

There were five areas in which I wanted to build background for a study of effective teachers for diverse students. First, I reviewed literature related to the history and development of diversity as a force in teaching and learning in the U.S., establishing the importance for teacher

educators and researchers to focus on issues of diversity. Next, I reviewed pedagogical approaches to teaching diverse learners as those approaches have developed within the United States. Third, I examined literature related to the preparation of culturally relevant teachers who are effective with all students. The organizational and social structures of schooling that act as forces of professional weathering on teachers who seek to expand their influence beyond the classroom is the fourth area that I reviewed. Finally, I looked at the research base for preparing teachers for work with diverse students in urban contexts.

Diversity in Teaching and Learning in the United States

Three aspects of diversity are foundational to understanding the development of public education in the United States; a) the historical development of the demographics of the teacher and student populations; b) current trends in student and teacher demographics within education in the United States; and c) the impact of the demographic mismatch on diverse students.

Historical Development of Teacher and Student Demographics

Teaching, learning, and diversity have been intertwined and integral to education in this nation from the time the Puritans, a people inspired by problems related to their religious differences, fled Europe, arriving on the continent to make a place among the native peoples of the region. The Puritans were a people dedicated to literacy for religious reasons. They believed that in order for their religion to be preserved, children must be able to read the scriptures to understand and do the will of God. For them, education bore a spiritual dimension. The idea that Satan himself was attempting to undermine the power of the scriptures by preventing young people from learning to read and write inspired community leaders to legislate literacy. The “Old Deluder Satan Act” of 1647 required towns of 50 or more families to provide schools for its

citizens and is considered to be the beginning of compulsory education in the United States (Urban & Wagoner, 2009, 41-45).

As industrialization, urbanization, and shifts in populations from rural areas to urban centers created large and developing cities in the 200 years after the institution of compulsory education, the citizens of New England embraced the ideals behind the common school movement as a solution to rapidly increasing diversity. Children of various ethnicities, linguistic and literacy backgrounds, and religious traditions were increasing in number, and the idea of educating diverse children in a common schoolhouse with a common curriculum was believed to be the way to convert newcomers into mainstream Americans (Herbst, 1989; Osgood, 1997; Urban & Wagoner, 2009). Diversity proved to be too much for the proponents of the common school movement, however, and as more and more immigrants brought massive social and economic diversification, Boston school officials in the late 1800s responded by setting up segregated schools, stratified curriculum, and age-graded classrooms, unable to handle "the complicated reality of diversity" (Osgood, 1997, p. 394).

As proponents of the common school movement struggled to deal with the rapidly increasing and deeply diverse student population, the demographics of the teaching force tilted in a new direction as immigration, industrialization, and bureaucratization of schools significantly increased the need for more teachers. As men exited the classroom to take jobs in burgeoning industries, they left openings for young women who were encouraged into the profession by reformers who emphasized the match between the woman's natural maternal instincts and the job of teaching. It turned out to be a perfect match, since hiring more teachers at lower salaries suited city budgets and women's job opportunities were generally very limited (Herbst, 1989; Hoffman, 2003; Rury, 1989).

This demographic trend in the teacher supply would prove to have distinctive and long-term implications for the teaching profession as well as for teacher education and research. As more and more white women took their places as the nation's teachers, teachers of color were systematically denied a major role in the profession. The overwhelming majority of blacks lived in the southern part of the United States where the forced integration of schools that had been previously segregated led to the firing of thousands of black teachers at various time periods when white local and state politicians used their power to keep white teachers in classrooms. Although discrimination was the largest factor in preventing teachers of color from entering the profession, lower enrollments, and shorter school sessions in the South also had a major impact in the numbers of teachers who were hired overall (Hutcheson, 2012; Siddle Walker, 2001; Tyack & Tobin, 1994).

With these historical events, the die was set for the current demographic phenomenon that characterizes the teaching force in the United States. Teachers in the United States remain predominantly female, white, and monolingual, residents of small towns and suburbs, a fairly homogeneous group, even as their students become representative of more and more diverse backgrounds (Herbst, 1989).

Current Trends in Student and Teacher Demographics

The passage of time has not erased the effects of history on the demographics of teaching and learning in the United States. Rather, racial, cultural, and linguistic diversity is increasing in classrooms in U.S. public schools. As the percentage of white students decreases, a trend that is projected to continue into the next century when the percentage of white students is expected to make up only 45% of all students, diverse student populations are increasing (Kena, et al., 2014). Hispanics are expected to represent students in larger numbers at 30%, Blacks at 15%, and Asian

and Pacific Islanders at 5%. Linguistic diversity among K12 students is also on the rise with 9% of all of the nation's students qualifying for English support services, a percentage that is even greater in large cities where almost 17% of all students speak a first language other than English (Kena et al., 2014).

While the demographic diversity of the student body continues to increase, the diversity of the teaching force is not increasing in schools in the United States. Eighty-three percent of all teachers in the United States are non-Hispanic, white females, and the majority of teachers in the nation's classrooms are expected to remain so unless purposeful and effective efforts are concentrated on preparing and retaining more teachers of color (Garcia et al., 2010; Johnson & Kardos, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Quartz et al., 2008). This demographic mismatch is perpetuated despite the increase of teacher candidates of color who completed teacher education programs, at an increase of 97% from 2003 to 2005, versus an increase of 41% for White teachers. Despite the recent increase in new teachers of color, the balance remains skewed, as teachers of color are consistently leaving the profession at higher rates than their white counterparts (Ingersoll & May, 2011). This exodus is linked to the fact that teachers of color are at least twice as likely to begin their careers in urban schools characterized by high poverty and vast racial and linguistic diversity, where the teacher turnover rate is about 20% per school year (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2014; Ingersoll, Merrill, & Stuckey, 2014; Ng & Thomas, 2007).

Fueling the high turnover rate that drains the teaching force of teachers of color is the fact that urban schools are frequently staffed with more uncertified and the least experienced teachers, and the majority of those teachers report that they feel unprepared to work with diverse and special needs students (Burstein et al., 2009; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Ladson-Billings,

2001). Overall, new teachers leave the profession within five years of entry at a rate of 41%, leaving a teaching force of which 45% have less than ten years of experience (Ingersoll et al., 2014). The challenge of preparing and retaining teachers who are effective for all students in all schools in the United States is more complicated than a demographic tradition that mismatches teachers and students and continues to lead to negative consequences for diverse students.

Impact of the Demographic Mismatch on Diverse Students

The demographic mismatch and increasing inexperience of the teaching force is especially concerning for students and stakeholders in diverse urban schools, because new teachers may be inadequately prepared for challenges inherent to urban school contexts (Castro, 2014; Clayton, 2011; Frankenberg, 2009; Headden, 2014; Ronfeldt, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2013). Milner (2010) describes five concepts that often negatively impact the effectiveness of new teachers who begin their careers in urban contexts without adequate preparation for urban schools. First, teachers without adequate preparation may attempt to practice color-blindness, which is an attempt to ignore race as a means of resolving the impact of diversity in their classrooms. This approach denies the salience of privilege and may actually lead to *dysconscious racism*, a perspective that justifies inequity by failing to question underlying causes of inequity (King, 1991). In addition, cultural conflict may arise in classrooms where teacher background and experience is starkly different from that of the students and their families, and teachers may struggle to make connections with their students (May, 2011). Irvine (2003) argues that teachers need to have the skill of viewing their classrooms with a cultural eye in order to achieve *cultural synchronization* and maximum effectiveness. Third, the myth of meritocracy, the misconception that success is fully the result of good choices and hard work (McIntosh, 1990), is a concept that may be propagated in demographically mismatched classrooms, particularly by teachers who

have not examined and come to terms with the ways they, themselves, have benefited from unearned privilege. Unexamined and intact, this concept often leads to two final destructive attitudes toward diverse students: deficit orientations and low expectations. Deficit orientations and low expectations influence teachers' instructional decisions from start to finish (Haberman, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1994).

Instructional decisions in diverse classrooms may also be less effective due to the fact that faculties are increasingly made up of more inexperienced teachers, and teaching experience has proven to positively impact student achievement (Headden, 2014; Henry, Bastian, & Fortner, 2011; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Quartz, 2003). Student achievement when measured through test scores increases throughout the first several years of teachers' careers, indicating the importance of experience (Ingersoll, et al, 2014). In addition, teacher turnover itself, while causing an increase in inexperienced teachers, has proven to have a harmful effect not only on student achievement, but also on the performance of the teachers who remain in the building (Ronfeldt et al., 2013).

Adding to the complexity of the demographic imbalance between teachers and students and the staffing challenges facing most urban schools is the fact that race, culture, and linguistic background are not guaranteed indicators of teachers' cultural disconnect with or effectiveness for diverse students (Laughter, 2011; Lewis, 2012; Milner, 2010). Increasing socioeconomic disparities, varying family structures due to sexual orientation, aging, adoption, and exposure to experiences related to globalization are evident in the schema, or background knowledge, of children in public schools (Ensign, 2009; Hamilton, Werum, Steelman, & Powell, 2011). The "untidy intersections of race, culture, and social class" (Goldenberg, 2014, p. 117) prohibit prediction of teacher effectiveness based on the matching of race between teacher and students,

since students and teachers embody "layers of diversity" (Milner, 2010, p. 179). While the demographic imperative is concerning because of the significant disparity represented, the task of preparing teachers who can bridge differences between themselves, their students, and educational demands of the system will continue to be important for all teachers as they will be working with children and families who represent multiple, intersecting layers of diversity.

Effective Teaching for Diverse Students

The task of preparing teachers for work with diverse learners is a concern that teacher educators and researchers have grappled with for decades, and developments in the field and resulting approaches have mirrored patterns evident in the broader field of teacher education. Cochran-Smith and Fries (2005, 2008) analyzed 50 years of teacher education research, outlining trends within a recurring three-stage pattern. First, historical or political events lead to widespread awareness of and concerns about quality teacher education. These concerns are then followed by a general condemnation of teacher education programs. The demand for reform is followed by more research, and the authors argue that resulting research on teacher education is framed by the way in which the problem of teacher education is defined at that point in time. I used Cochran-Smith and Fries historical categories to organize my review of approaches to preparing teachers for diverse students, although the time periods are general, and the trends and issues are overlapping. I reviewed approaches to teacher preparation and practices in working with diverse students in two ways: a) teaching as a one-way transaction, and b) teaching as a two-way transaction.

Teaching as a One-Way Transaction

As Cochran-Smith and Fries (2008) categorize it, early research on teacher preparation (1920-1950) developed in response to the portrayal of teacher preparation as a *curriculum*

problem. While industrialization, urbanization, and immigration had been impetus for accepting normal school graduation for teachers in the first decade of the century, by the 1920s a desire to upgrade the teaching profession influenced officials' efforts to systematize and standardize educational requirements for teachers, and this period also marked the first attempts to develop scientific methods for teaching. The general sense was that if teachers themselves had adequate knowledge, they were prepared to be effective with students. Teacher preparation shifted from a two-year curriculum to a bachelor's degree requirement over a period of forty years that had major implications for institutions that prepared teachers (Hutcheson & Pederson, 2002).

Similarly, the following period from 1950-1980 marked an increasing emphasis on developing the scientific basis for teaching. The Truman Commission on Higher Education report of 1947 outlined a new national vision for increased access for all citizens to higher education, and post World War II events such as the launch of Sputnik in 1957 spurred a frenzy to develop a new generation of scientists (Hutcheson, 2007; Urban, 2010). While teaching was still perceived primarily as the technical transmission of knowledge, pinpointing the most effective procedures for training teachers was the focus. For this reason, Cochran-Smith and Fries (2005, 2008) categorize the research of this period as focused on teacher education as a *training problem*. Teacher rather than student outcomes were the focus of research, since the correlation to effectiveness was assumed. The assumption was that teachers were prepared for effectiveness with students when they were equipped with the best teaching methods to deposit their own knowledge within students.

Teaching preparation prior to the 1980s reinforced an emphasis on teacher knowledge as superior, and students who came to the education system in the United States from linguistic, cultural, and literary backgrounds other than the dominant culture were schooled as if their

differences were, in fact, deficits. Paris and Alim (2014) refer to these approaches as *deficit pedagogies*. Deficit approaches aimed at erasing differences that students bring to the education system have manifested themselves throughout history in the United States in the form of reservation boarding schools where native American children were separated from their families for the purpose of cultural assimilation; ungraded classrooms where children of diverse cultures, first languages, and varying abilities were isolated from other students; culture of poverty work that fostered low expectations and deficit orientations; and ongoing English-only policies that undermine students' and families' home languages and inhibit their opportunities to become multilingual (Osgood, 1997; Paris, 2012; Urban & Wagoner, 2009). Teacher preparation focused on teacher learning, and deficit pedagogical approaches toward diverse student reinforced the view that teaching was a one-way transaction that took place from the teacher to the student.

Teaching as a Two-Way Transaction

Focus on teacher knowledge and deficit approaches to teaching shifted during the decade from 1980-1990. Economic difficulties and several influential reports, *A Nation at Risk* (1983), and two others, The Holmes Group in 1986 and Goodlad in 1990, resulted in renewed emphasis on improving the global competitiveness of public schools and on producing knowledgeable professional teachers, students, and school leaders. A shift from casting teaching as simply knowledge transmission, to looking at teaching as a social exchange between participants, added to the complexity of teacher education as candidates' knowledge, dispositions, and backgrounds all became important in teacher preparation. For this reason, Cochran-Smith and Fries (2008) describe the approach to teacher education during this decade as a *learning problem*. Unlike the previous decades of teacher education research, emphasis during this time period and forward

included focus on student learning and outcomes, and this concern directly impacted approaches to teaching diverse learners.

Along with the changing understandings of teacher and student learning that characterize the 1980s came approaches to diverse students that Paris (2012) identifies as *difference pedagogies*. Also called asset pedagogies, these perspectives are based on research that demonstrated the value of using cultural, linguistic, and literacy differences as foundations for learning. The goal from this perspective was to bridge differences using students' backgrounds as springboards to propel them toward access to the dominant culture. While resource pedagogies such as the work of Moll and Gonzalez (1994) on *funds of knowledge* and the notion of *third space* as outlined by Guttierrez, Baquedano-Lopez, and Tejeda (1999) did not devalue the diverse backgrounds of students of color, they did not make any attempt to preserve non-dominant cultural ways of being (Paris, 2012).

Culturally Relevant Pedagogical Approaches

Beliefs that best practices included the incorporation of students' backgrounds took hold and continued to evolve, and important theoretical approaches to teaching diverse learners emerged. King (1991) challenged prevalent approaches to diversity as shallow and lacking the power to promote equity due to a failure to address the cultural experiences of white teachers. Without an understanding of their own experience as partakers in the privileges inherent to membership in the dominant culture, King argued that new teachers maintain *dysconscious racism*. It is only through praxis of transmutation, a pedagogical process that guides critical reflection and self discovery and models teaching for social justice, that they can be equipped to recognize and resist inequities in their classrooms and schools (King, 1997).

Irvine (2003) extended work related to teachers' beliefs and dispositions toward diversity by examining the interactions between effective teachers and their diverse students. She argued that a curriculum approach to preparing teachers for work with diverse students was not enough, that a pedagogy of translation including notions of caring, other mothering, and demand combined with discipline was necessary. Irvine posited that context influences teaching and learning at four important levels. "Teaching is 1) some person 2) teaching some thing 3) to some student 4) somewhere" (Irvine, 2003, p. 48). Preparing teachers to view their work through a cultural eye was necessary to their ability to achieve *cultural synchronization* with their students.

Teachers who approach their work with diverse students with a cultural eye will translate awareness to action in their practice, and theories of practice developed to address teachers' actions with their students. Ladson-Billings (1994) proposed a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy, based on her research on the education of African-American students that linked learning with deep understandings and appreciation for culture within classroom practice. Culturally relevant pedagogy proposes to develop students who are academically successful, culturally competent, and able to comprehend and critique existing social order. Teachers who exemplify culturally relevant practice will be confident in their students' strengths and abilities to achieve academically and will approach their teaching and learning interactions as reciprocal learners, appreciating and drawing on community and collaboration efforts. Finally, culturally relevant teachers will develop in their students the realization that knowledge is constructed, and learning is an ongoing process that includes continued scrutiny and challenge to social inequities.

Based on research with various culturally and ethnically diverse student groups, Gay (2000) expanded on culturally relevant pedagogy to address the need for teachers to have the tools to work effectively with all representations of diversity. Culturally responsive pedagogy is

the theoretical framework supporting the use of cultural characteristics, or layers of lived experiences, as conduits for effective teaching. Teaching to and through strengths of diverse students is culturally validating and affirming, and should include: 1) developing knowledge about cultural diversity, 2) incorporating multicultural curriculum, 3) demonstrating caring and community building, 4) communicating with diverse students, and 4) differentiating instruction to support diverse learners (Gay, 2000).

Nearly two decades after Ladson-Billings' groundbreaking research and writing on culturally relevant pedagogy and a decade after Gay's work building toward culturally responsive pedagogy, Paris (2012) has proposed the theory of culturally sustaining pedagogy. He argues that Ladson-Billings (1994) intended for the notion of developing culturally competent students to include support for maintenance of home cultural and community practices, and that relevance and response are not strong enough approaches to achieve this goal. Furthermore, he suggests that linguistic and cultural flexibility is becoming more and more necessary for success in United States and global educational contexts as demographics continue to shift toward a larger non-white population (Paris & Alim, 2014). As Ladson-Billings (2014) stated, "Scholarship, like culture, is fluid…" and noted the need for a "remix" of the theory of culturally relevant pedagogy in order to provide equitable educational opportunities for diverse students (p. 75). Sustaining diverse cultural, linguistic, and literary practices is necessary for a thriving pluralistic society, and educational theory and research has arrived at this conclusion.

Preparing Culturally Relevant Teachers

Trends in research on education and in approaches to teaching diverse students have evolved along with attitudes toward diversity within the U.S., but the question remains as to what research tells us about how to best prepare teachers for work with diverse students. In this

section of my literature review I discuss research findings about teacher preparation for culturally relevant practice as it relates to: 1) effective preparation of culturally relevant teachers, and 2) teacher retention within urban high-need schools.

What Culturally Relevant Teachers Must Know and Do

Sleeter (2008) selected studies published after 1980 that specifically focused on preparing White teachers for teaching diverse students in order to develop a framework for program development to prepare preservice and support inservice teachers, who were at that time more than 90% White. Sleeter argued that for White teachers to be effective in closing the achievement gap for students of color, it is not enough to prepare them to teach as well as the average teacher. Instead, they must be equipped to resist ongoing socialization forces such as their own lived experiences in heterogeneous communities, their ongoing experiences as students in traditional classrooms, and policies that reinforce a "banking" model of teaching. Sleeter made the case that evidence supports the effectiveness of programs where teacher educators share a vision for the purpose of education, the nature of teaching and learning, and the nature and value of equity and diversity, and where that vision is evident and aligned with the curriculum and experiences in the program.

Nested within a coherent and balanced program, Sleeter described a three-legged, evidence-based platform necessary for initially preparing White teachers for diverse students. First, cross-cultural, community-based field experiences along with thoughtfully planned background research, curriculum integration, and guided reflection were integral to preparing White teachers for work with their diverse students. Careful planning and implementation were required for these experiences, since research findings suggested that without guidance, those experiences might actually reinforce negative stereotypes and deficit views (Villegas & Lucas,

2002). Coursework centered on culture and equity pedagogy was another component necessary for initial preparation for diversity, and a balance must be sought between a single course approach and weaving the work into coursework to the level of dilution. Sleeter noted that active learning strategies such as journaling, reading and writing biographies, mail exchanges, and projects around multicultural children's literature are the most effective pedagogies. The benefits of these practices for White preservice teachers included increased awareness of discrimination and racism, rejection of low expectations, courage in discussing racial issues with those of color, and a greater awareness of personal cultural selves. According to Sleeter, research supported a third aspect to a coherent program for White teachers that emerged from the understanding that learning to teach was a developmental process that moved from an inward focus toward a focus on students. Sleeter argued that for White teachers, the combination of the development process and learning to work with diverse students might necessitate field placements as long as one school year in order to move candidates from culture shock to culturally relevant practice.

Within a teacher preparation program model such as the one Sleeter (2008) describes, culturally relevant teachers should develop dispositions and practices of effective practice. Grant and Gibson (2011) compiled a conceptual review based on the work of 16 senior scholars, linking research to practice that was effective at bridging cultural and demographic differences between teachers and students. According to the authors' review of 83 studies, the following topics addressed what teachers need to know, believe, and do as culturally relevant educators, and these topics should be addressed within teacher education programs focused on diversity:

1. Generativity. Teachers must be able to take knowledge gained in their teacher preparation programs and add and/or adapt it to produce new solutions to challenges in diverse classrooms.

2. The social context of schooling. Teachers need to have an understanding of structural inequalities and have the ability to critically analyze sociopolitical structures.

3. Cultural knowledge. Teachers need to know how to learn about their students' cultures, and community-based field experiences combined with guided reflection and supervision are effective practices for this goal.

4. Self-Knowledge. Teachers must come to an understanding of their own cultural selves through scaffolded self-exploration.

5. Habits of mind. Teachers must develop an "inquiry as stance" approach that equips them to combine cultural, contextual, and content knowledge with pedagogical tools to improve their practice.

6. Reflective communities of practice. Teachers must resist isolation and seek collaborative opportunities involving all stakeholders within the profession, an effective practice that teachers should observe within their preparation programs (Tinker Sachs, Fisher, & Cannon, 2011).

7. Field experiences. Teachers must seek out experiences with experts in the field in order to observe transformative teaching.

8. Assessing teacher competencies. Assessments of teachers should include not only beliefs, but also demonstrations of multicultural practices in classrooms.
practice that was effective at bridging cultural and demographic differences between teachers and students. According to the authors' review of 83 studies, the following topics addressed what teachers need to know, believe, and do as culturally relevant educators, and these topics should be addressed within teacher education programs focused on diversity:

While research on teaching practices that equip teachers for work with culturally diverse students is informative for teacher educators, Grant and Agosto (2011) argued that research focused on social justice in teacher education might actually help to redefine notions of teacher capacity by communicating a changing expectation for teachers' practices and teacher education. As the public has become more aware of and less patient with gaps in student achievement, inequities in funding for staff and resources, and faculty and staff hiring procedures, research on social justice in teacher education has increased, and with little change evident in these areas, the emphasis on social justice is likely to continue. Expectations that teachers should be prepared for effective practice with all children reinforce the need for rigorous and appropriate teacher preparation.

Teacher Preparation that Supports High-Need Schools

Teachers who are prepared for and equipped to use culturally relevant practices are more effective with diverse students, and they also demonstrate greater persistence in challenging school contexts. Freedman and Appleman (2009) found that teachers who graduated from a preparation program that specialized in work within high-need urban schools persisted in those school contexts largely due to the beliefs, dispositions, and teaching skills they gained from their program. The program focus cast urban schools as simply a special context rather than a problem to be solved, and, likewise, diverse students were seen a source of commitment and inspiration for advocacy. "The program tried to normalize urban teaching rather than problematize it, even though the challenges of urban teaching were explored frankly" (p. 334). Beyond a frank approach to urban-school contexts, effective teachers are more likely to remain in high-need urban schools when they recognize strengths within the community, feel confident in making changes to benefit their students, and seek out professional supports (Quartz, 2003).

Retaining well-qualified, effective teachers in urban, high-need schools is an ongoing challenge and one that makes a difference in the education and lives of children schooled in these contexts (Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2005; Darling Hammond, 2006). Teachers intentionally prepared for work in urban, high-need schools with diverse students are equipped for effective practice and for an expanded expectation of their work as teachers.

Organizational and Social Influences on Teachers

Teachers who are committed to practices based on culturally relevant ideals have a vision for their work that extends beyond traditional expectations for the work of teachers, but traditional expectations for the teaching profession in the United States are the result of organizational and social frames that have evolved into a system that tends to reinforce tradition and to work against efforts for reform. John Dewey, an influential progressive education reformer, philosopher, and theorist of the early 20th century, called for reform of teachers' work to accommodate a child-focused pedagogy that included consideration of students' needs and abilities and construction of learning experiences that were appropriately active and social (Dewey, 1904, 1938/1997). Opposing traditional teacher-dominated, subject-centered curriculum, his assertion was that opportunities for student-led inquiry and discovery resulted in student engagement, self-direction, and skill and appreciation for learning itself (Dewey, 1904, 1938/1997). Dewey's (1938/1997) vision for learning in school included consideration for the impact of schooling experiences on students' futures as well as toward the goal of a more just and equitable society. He argued, "Every experience lives on in future experiences," (p.27) as well as, "It is then the business of the educator to see in what direction an experience is heading," (p. 38). Dewey's child-centered vision for teaching and learning was supplanted by an administrative approach to education that privileged efficiency and regulation, the consequences

of which have threatened subsequent progressive theories of learning such as culturally relevant pedagogy (Labaree, 2004).

Morrison et al. (2008) reviewed research on the enactment of culturally relevant practices in classrooms, highlighting the challenges to operationalizing culturally relevant pedagogy. The authors argue that schools are set up to privilege traditional methods of teaching, and that enacting culturally relevant pedagogy is a nearly impossible task for teachers, because of the clash between the traditional and expanded notions of teaching. In this section of my literature review I looked at work related to the organizational structure and social constraints that reinforce traditional teacher roles and act as forces of professional weathering on teachers with visions to enact culturally relevant practice in their classrooms.

Organizational Structure of Schooling in the United States

The organizational structure of school in the United States has its origin in the Common School movement that pushed the nation toward tax-supported public education for all children in the 1800s (Lightfoot, 1978; Osgood, 1997; Tyack, 1974; Tyack & Tobin, 1994). By the end of the 1800s industrialization, urbanization, and shifts in populations from rural areas to urban centers forced city leaders and reformers to address school system growth, and they turned to more complex organizational and administrative solutions. The one-room schoolhouses, products of community interests and community control, that dotted the rural landscape of the United States, gave way to larger, consolidated schools. Tyack (1974) traced the development of *the one best system*, the new educational solution that resulted from these efforts. Age-grading and uniform curriculum, along with written examinations and assessments were characteristics that distinguished the system from the common school model, where the one classroom was ungraded, with all ages working together and even teaching each other. The schedule of the

urban school was rigid and prescribed, rather than flexible and adaptable to community needs, and parents and teachers were not necessarily acquainted, since teachers might live some distance from the school.

Tyack and Tobin (1994) argue that the invention of the graded school grew out of an effort to efficiently address growing urban populations, and it was intended to be replicable, standardized, and equitable. Reformers soon turned their sights on implementing *the one best system* in rural areas in an attempt to make schools more efficient, professional, rigorous, and independent of community control. The creation of the age-graded school had important consequences for the development of the role of teachers in the United States. The division of labor and hierarchy of supervision that characterized age-graded schools were based on a factory model of replication of effort. Teachers were placed in separate, single-grade classrooms, and the expectation was that they would be teaching the same subjects, the same way in the same space day after day. The age-graded or *egg-crate* school was widespread by 1870, and it was largely inhabited by women working alone with a group of children for most of the day, under the supervision of a male administrator, a situation that Tyack (1974) calls the *pedagogical harem*.

This structure organized the work of instruction, and Tyack and Tobin (1994) call it the *grammar of schooling*. They argue that, just as grammar invisibly organizes language, school routines and structures organize schooling in such a way that people accept the structures as indicative of what school is supposed to be. The grammar of schooling has reinforced the system and proven to be remarkably resistant to reforms and serves to preserve the status quo. Division of time and space, classification and separation of students into rooms, and fragmentation of knowledge into isolated subjects reinforced isolation at every level of the system, and this influence is still evident within the culture of the teaching profession.

Societal Influences on Teachers' Work

In addition to the grammar of schooling that reinforces traditional teacher roles and practices, social influences have a long history and continued impact on the work of teachers. I addressed the societal influences on teachers' work by first by examining two important sociological studies of U.S. teachers. Next, I considered the ways that gendered stereotypes have constrained and continue to impact teaching, a consequence of the feminization of teaching.

Sociological studies of teachers. Teachers and schools have long been a population of interest to researchers. Willard Waller conducted the first sociological study of the culture of schools in 1932, and his guiding question, " (p. 375)) do to teachers?" resulted in the conclusion that teaching in the United States under prevailing stereotypes of the teacher had a devastating effect on teachers personally and professionally. Teachers operated in the community under strict behavioral expectations and restrictions, effectively isolating them socially, and he argued that their suspension between roles of dominance and submission actually diminished their personalities. The job required completion of daily repetitive tasks, maintenance of control in the classroom, and control of behavior and actions at all times, activities that Waller argued squelched creativity and flexibility and fostered a deadly institutional formalism. Furthermore, in trying to live up to the job requirements, teachers generally began to identify with the façade that others applied to them, and their limited self-perceptions prevented them from being autonomous, self-directed people within society. Waller believed for the teaching profession to change, teachers would have to be freed of the social restrictions and special status treatment they received in their communities, and they would need to come to terms with conflicted self images (Waller, 1932).

Dan Lortie published another groundbreaking study of the sociology of teachers, *Schoolteacher*, in 1975. The findings of this study were based on interviews with 94 teachers about their work in schools around Boston. Lortie argued that three characteristics of teachers, conservatism, individualism, and a present orientation, are at work within the personalities of many teachers and are reinforced by the organizational system of education. He examined three elements that are integral to all professions, recruitment, socialization, and career rewards in order to understand how the profession attracts and reinforces conservatism, individualism, and present-orientation.

First, regarding recruitment, Lortie observed five prevalent attractions to teaching: 1) work with young people; 2) a desire to remain in school; 3) a sense of service; 4) material benefits; and 5) attractive work schedule. He argued that the fact that these factors are attractive to potential teachers indicates that they have an orientation to continuity or preserving the past and to a focus on the present, that is short-term rewards. People drawn to the job of teaching because of their own success in the system are not likely to be motivated to change it, and, likewise, those who come to the job because of the pay or the schedule may not be passionate enough about the profession to be invested in improving it.

Socialization is the second element of the profession that Lortie explored, and he made the important point that new teachers begin their socialization as student teachers having already experienced an average of 13,000 hours in direct contact with classroom teachers by the time they graduate from high school. These thousands of hours of observation are not just passive observations rather, they are interactional relationships that become an *apprenticeship of observation* that has long-term influence and works toward continuity rather than change. Early years of teaching are often characterized as a lonely, sink-or-swim experience, and the lack of a

codified, professional knowledge base leaves teachers to learn through their own trial and error. In addition, the physical cells in which teachers work often do not allow, much less promote, collaboration with other teachers. Lortie argued that socialization is primarily self-socialization, and learning to teach is a private ordeal that promotes individualism, continuity, and conservatism. He described the early years of teaching as a perilous time for new teachers, as they struggle to put theory into practice, and many revert back to practices they know from their own apprenticeship of observation.

The last aspect of the teaching profession that Lortie considered is related to career rewards. He argued that the fact that teaching is an unstaged career makes teachers less future oriented and more focused on the present than other professionals. The salary structure offers generally higher entry salaries with smaller increases over time, features that early teacher organizations pushed for when women generally worked fewer years and turnover was high in the profession. Another consequence of the unstaged nature of the profession is that those teachers who work longer and harder than others may feel resentful and, in fact, be resented by other teachers. The only option for advancing is to leave the classroom, and in this way, the system is set up to promote recruitment rather than retention, all consequences that reinforce isolation and conservatism.

Sociological research supports the fact that the teaching profession works to reinforce traditional teacher roles. To recruit and retain teachers not restrained by conservatism, individualism, and a present orientation, Lortie (1975) recommended that teacher education programs screen applicants to identify candidates who are flexible, creative, adaptive to new ideas, and able to deal with ambiguity. Also, Lortie called for more longitudinal studies to identify relationships between teacher character types, training, and teaching practices, more

mentoring, rigorous professional development, and inquiry-based research opportunities for teachers (Lortie, 1975). Organizational and social influences combine into forces of professional weathering that erode or eliminate teachers' abilities to enact their visions for culturally relevant practice.

Research Focused on Effective Teachers for Diverse Students

Research focused on effective teaching for diverse learners has increased significantly in the previous quarter century. While research supports the effectiveness of culturally relevant pedagogy for teaching diverse students, scholars agree that gaps persist and outcomes are inconsistent and inconclusive in the knowledge base. Multiple literature reviews in the field over the decades have noted the prevalence of small-scale studies, particularly self-studies by teacher educators (Grant & Gibson, 2011; Hollins & Guzman, 2005; Sleeter, 2008; Sleeter & Owuor, 2011). Scholars argue that this pattern, resulting from the general lack of emphasis and funding for studies investigating work with diverse students, allows for gaps and diminishes the potential for transferability. Also, weaknesses in study quality such as lack of thick description, overreliance on self-report with few follow-up observations, lack of attention to instrument validity, and the failure to re-administer measures to confirm growth and change are also recurring issues in the research base (Anderson & Stillman, 2013; Hollins & Guzman, 2005; Sleeter, 2008; Sleeter & Owuor, 2011). Thin detail about placement, geographic, and cultural settings is a consistent weakness in much of the research, and presentation of the cultural mismatch in simplistic ways offers little basis for determining effective student teaching practices. In addition, a recurring assumption in the literature that any positive move on the part of a teacher candidate toward work with diverse students is a success story, is less than truthful at

best and, frankly, disturbing considering the negative impact teacher candidates' deficit dispositions and attitudes may have on K-12 students (Anderson & Stillman, 2013).

An additional consequence of weak study quality is that while the research reflects levels of success in preparing teachers for work with diverse students, the gains often do not rise above the level of awareness, and awareness does not predict implementation or even the ability to implement culturally relevant teaching. With the focus of research limited to short-term outcomes, little light is shed on what actually happens when teachers close their classroom doors and begin work with their diverse students. Follow-up observations would strengthen links between preparation and practice and address the notably paradoxical assumption within much of the research that beliefs are easily changed during preparation, but remain constant over time despite contextual challenges that will arise (Anderson & Stillman, 2013; Barker, Bhatnagar, & Many, 2013). Also studies that link field experience outcomes with perspectives and practices of supervisors, cooperating teachers, and multicultural teacher-education graduates may lead to a greater understanding of which types of programs are most effective in preparing teachers for work with diverse students (Anderson & Stillman, 2013; Grant & Agosto, 2011).

Overall, the research base needs to address: 1) how teachers are being prepared for work with diverse learners; and 2) how preparation impacts practice. Ladson-Billings (1999) noted, "Multicultural teacher education continues to suffer from a thin, poorly developed, fragmented literature that provides an inaccurate picture of the kind of preparation teachers receive to teach in culturally diverse classrooms" (p. 114). Dunn (2010) echoed this statement more than a decade later after reviewing research on urban teacher preparation, arguing that widely varying teacher preparation programs and evaluation practices not only complicate analysis that could

strengthen the research base, but also they entangle efforts to link program characteristics with outcomes.

Conclusion

Within this literature review I have covered work that establishes the fact that diversity impacts all aspects of teaching and learning in U.S. public schools because of the stark difference between an increasingly diverse K-5 student population and a relatively homogeneous teacher population. In addition, I have discussed research that supports the fact that diverse students thrive in classrooms when their teachers practice culturally relevant pedagogy, a fact that may become even more important as layers of diversity continue to expand due to globalization. Literature supporting the impact of organizational and social forces that act as professional weathering agents on teachers is evidence that preparing teachers for work beyond the traditional role of teachers is a challenging endeavor. Finally, my review of research on teacher education for diverse students reveals that work in this challenging field would be strengthened by study designs that include thick description of contexts and observations of classroom practice, particularly with participants who are effective, committed teachers in urban schools, to understand the effects of their teacher preparation on their practices. My study of just such a group of teachers and the attention to methodological quality that I outline in the following chapter, will contribute to the knowledge base for preparing teachers for work with diverse students.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

Maybe stories are just data with a soul.
Brené Brown

This chapter describes the data sources and data collection, analysis, and management procedures incorporated into this multicase study. A multicase design is appropriate for investigating the work of a group of effective teachers, because learning to teach and developing as a professional in the early years of a teaching career is a complex process involving multiple, social realities and interactions as well as individual contextual conditions (Stake, 2006; Yin, 2009). The case in this study was bounded by the requirements that participants were graduates of the UACM program who had continued to teach in high-need urban schools for two years after certification and who were recognized as effective teachers of diverse students. In order to more deeply understand how the participants envisioned, enacted, and sustained their expanded roles as teachers, I included multiple cases within the design of the exploratory study. Stake (2006) argueed that understanding how a phenomenon presents itself in varied contexts is an important reason for conducting a multicase study. A literal replication procedure can demonstrate how different contexts may also influence the teachers' work and illustrate an array of realities related to the questions (Stake, 2006; Yin, 2009).

Research Questions

I posed the following research questions to guide my inquiry into the work of a group of teachers who were effective advocates for diverse students in urban high-need elementary schools:

1. How do effective teachers who were prepared in a program centered within a framework of cultural relevance envision their roles as advocates?

2. How do effective teachers who were prepared in a program centered within a framework of cultural relevance enact their visions as advocates?
3. How do effective teachers who were prepared in a program centered within a framework of cultural relevance resist traditional teacher roles and sustain their own evolving visions as advocates?

Conceptual Framework

Despite the fact that universities are focusing efforts on preparing teachers for an increasingly diverse student population, forces outside of the classroom may serve as professional weathering agents that wear down the effectiveness of teachers who are prepared for and intend to be advocates for their students. I wanted to understand how effective teachers envision their work as advocates for their students, and how they have resisted contextual forces and sustained their visions for culturally relevant practice.

This study is grounded in the theory of culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1990, 1994, 1995, 2001). Since the participants in this study received their preparation within a program that was founded and operated around principles of culturally relevant pedagogy, the framework was appropriate as an evaluative tool for identifying participants, guiding data collection, and conducting data analysis. Culturally relevant teachers can be expected to: a) demand that their students experience academic success; b) support students in maintaining their own culture while becoming proficient in other cultures; and c) equip their students with an awareness that will empower them to challenge social and political forces that impact their lives (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

This approach effectively builds bridges between the curriculum and students whose backgrounds are distinct from the dominant culture, unlocking doors to achievement that have

historically been difficult to breach, and this kind of bridge building is a vital skill for all teachers in the U.S. The demographic mismatch between most of the teaching force in the U.S. is only becoming more complicated by increasing socioeconomic disparities, immigration, and globalization of business (Zhao, 2010). All teachers, regardless of their own demographic categories, are likely to work with children representing races, ethnicities, and languages, as well as aspects of gender, family background, religion, nationality, and socioeconomic status that are different from their own background (Hamilton et al., 2011; Ladson-Billings, 2001, 2014). Preparing teachers who maintain high expectations and advocate for all students despite differences, and who maintain and enact a commitment to change through developing their diverse students' cultural competence and sociopolitical consciousness, necessitates expectations for teachers that go beyond traditional teacher roles (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Work on teachers' visions informed this study as well, illuminating the importance of teachers' ideals for their practice and their role in the education profession (Hammerness, 2006). Research suggests that teachers have ideal visions for their practice, and these visions are substantial, vivid, and remain consistent over time (Hammerness, 2006). Furthermore, Hammerness (2008) found that teachers' visions are powerful influences in determining teacher effectiveness and perseverance within the profession. Vision shapes the way that they feel about their teaching, their students, and their school and helps to explain the changes they make in their classrooms, the choices they make in their teaching, and even the decisions they make about their futures as teachers. When they feel that their visions are within reach and they may be able to attain them, they feel successful and remain motivated, committed, and inspired in teaching. But when they believe that their vision is far from what their actual experience, they may come

to doubt themselves, their schools, their students, and their future as teachers. (Hammerness, 2006)

Schulman (2006) argued that teachers' visions for their work might tie together elements of teacher effectiveness that are often presented in isolation: content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, sociopolitical values, and student achievement on test scores. Moreover, Schulman argued that these visions, which comprise packages of teacher effectiveness, are malleable and "appear to be deeply influenced by the quality and character of teacher education and professional development that teachers undertake" (Schulman, 2006, ix).

The development and maintenance of vision in the work of effective teachers who were prepared in an urban-focused teacher preparation program and who have resisted contextual forces and sustained their culturally relevant ideals is a process that was foundational to the research questions.

Participants

The case in this study was bounded by the requirements that participants were effective urban teachers who graduated from the UACM program, a program that was designed for and dedicated to the development of teachers who embrace and embody an expanded definition of the traditional role of a teacher. While pedagogically competent, these exemplary teachers were also prepared with the expectation that they would be empowered advocates and change agents inside and outside the classroom, promoting the success of their culturally and linguistically diverse elementary students schooled in urban contexts through culturally relevant practice.

The program is situated in an urban research university that works in close collaboration with surrounding metropolitan school districts, and participants were experienced teacher graduates working in high-need schools within the partner districts. The UACM program was

created in 2002 within the Early Childhood Education Department of GSU in an effort to provide highly qualified teachers for area high-need partner schools by offering an alternative certification path for college graduates seeking to change careers and to become certified teachers. With the award of a federal support grant in 2007, the Urban Teachers Research Project (UTRP) gained the mechanism to develop a comprehensive database for the purpose of tracking graduates to determine retention rates and career development. The first cohort to complete certification under the UTRP began teaching during the 2009-10 school year. Two UACM cohorts that are now each beyond the 5-years mark, report 100% retention at 3 years out, and 91-95% at 5 years out (APR, 2014).

The program evolved significantly in response to the needs of partner districts and developing policies related to teacher preparation, but a hallmark of the program design that remained consistent was the effort to maximize multiple and diverse field experiences through intentional collaborations among faculty, teacher candidates, school-based mentor teachers, and school administrators. Federal grant funding provided the means for program participants to receive a stipend during the first year of intensive preparation. The participants in this study engaged in the program when the design required teacher candidates in the six-semester UACM cohort-based program to begin their journey to certification and master's degree with an introductory Maymester course that was designed to challenge their preconceptions about urban contexts and diverse learners and to instill or extend a commitment to educational equity. Immediately following the introductory course, teacher candidates began site-based coursework and their first field experiences interacting with children and families of diverse backgrounds in urban contexts. Candidates supported EL students through literacy tutoring in collaboration with a local refugee resettlement agency as well as participated as interns in a summer STEM Camp.

During the fall semester, each teacher candidate completed a placement with a partner school mentor teacher beginning with opening school activities. A two-week fall placement with an ESOL teacher gave teacher candidates insight into the work of professionals whose role was intensely collaborative and targeted toward supporting EL students, their parents, and their classroom teachers and administrators. During the spring semester, the teacher candidates completed an additional classroom placement. At the end of the first year of the program having earned 47 credit hours, UACM teacher candidates earned PreK-5th grade teaching certification and the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) endorsement. During the second year of the program, UACM candidates became teachers-of-record in high-need urban schools. They received ongoing, classroom-based university support in their schools, even as they returned to the university in the evenings to complete an additional 30 credit hours that led to a master's degree in early childhood education at the end of the second year of the program (Williams et al., 2012).

I drew on the teacher graduate pool to recruit participants who were UACM graduates completing their second year of continuous teaching experience in high-need urban schools and who were recognized as effective teachers. The second year of teaching is significant in terms of teacher development and attrition, as well as in expectations of effectiveness for student learning (Henry et al., 2011; Quartz et al., 2003). Henry et al. found that teachers' effectiveness, when based on their students' improvement in test scores, significantly increases during teachers' second year in service, but for those teachers who remain in the profession for five years, there is little increase in effectiveness based on this measure after the third year. In terms of attrition, first-year teachers leave the profession at a rate of more than 13 percent, and more than 40 percent of teachers leave within five years of entry (Quartz et al., 2003; Ingersoll et al., 2014).

Focusing my study on teachers who were completing their second year of teaching ensured that they had significant time to increase their effectiveness and to develop intentions regarding their futures in challenging urban contexts.

While alumnae and alumni records provided historical and logistical information related to UACM teacher graduates, I drew on elements of community nomination as described by Ladson-Billings (1994) in her study of effective teachers of African American students. While Ladson-Billings was able to draw on her community connections to lead her to effective teachers, I relied first on recommendations from program faculty and supervisors who were familiar with the program graduates and their work in metro school districts using a nomination survey that was sent electronically to those stakeholders (Appendix A). In order to crosscheck the initial nominations, I personally contacted each of the teachers' principals, asking them to confirm the nomination of each teacher.

Stake (2006) argued that the benefits of multicase study designs are maximized when the number of individual cases lies between 4 and 15, although he acknowledged that some phenomenon may lend themselves to the inclusion of more or less cases. I recruited four cases, meeting the general requirements for selection for a multicase study: 1) relevance to the phenomenon; 2) contextual diversity; and 3) accessibility for understanding the complexity of the case (Stake, 2006). Because I had more nominations than I was able to use for the study, I purposefully selected prospective participants, taking into consideration school location, to increase contextual variety and possibilities for intensive study (Stake, 2006).

Upon receiving Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from Georgia State University and the school district sites for the study, I emailed invitations to potential participants, informing them that they had been nominated to participate in the study due to their reputations as effective

teachers for diverse students and inviting them to take part in the study. The invitation included details about the purpose of the study and a description of the activities participants would engage in if they choose to participate. All of the potential participants that I contacted responded to say that they would like to meet personally to learn more details about the study, and they all signed the informed consent and received a copy of it for their records at the time of our meeting. In addition, I scheduled the initial interviews with the participants at that time and invited them to bring self-selected artifacts from their classrooms that illustrated their visions for their work as advocates to discuss during the first interview.

After stakeholders in the UACM program nominated teacher graduates for possible participation in the study, and the school principals of the teachers I selected confirmed the nominations, I recruited four participants who took part in the study. Over a period of 16 weeks during spring semester of 2015 I interviewed and observed the participants a total of 25 different times.

Data Sources and Collection

Case study is appropriate for understanding complex human processes and for coping with situations when contextual factors may blur and complicate findings. Yin (2009) posited three principles that strengthen the quality of case study research and analysis, increasing the likelihood of the development of converging findings: 1) inclusion of multiple sources of data; 2) creation of a case study data base; and 3) maintenance of a chain of evidence. I address these principles in the following sections covering data sources and collection, data management, and data analysis.

The data for this study were collected on each of the cases over the course of five months, capturing the work of the teacher participants in the spring semester of their second year of

teaching in urban high-need schools (Appendices B & C). Data collected in the course of the interviews, observations, and focus groups revealed in-depth understanding of each subject, and they were collected with the researcher in close proximity to the subjects (Creswell, 2013). The timing of the data collection activities in this study, spring semester of one school year, provided perspectives of the teacher participants' work with groups of students who were settled into the routines and expectations of their current grade levels and classrooms. Primary data collected and analyzed for this study included extant artifacts in the form of capstone projects (required video assignments created by the participants for completion of their master's degree), three individual interviews with each participant, three scheduled school-related observations, and three focus groups interviews (Appendix D). The following table (Table 1) presents the relationship between the research questions and the data sources.

Table 1
Research Questions to Data Sources

Questions	Data Sources
How does an effective teacher who was prepared in a program centered within a framework of cultural relevance envision his or her role as an advocate? • *What were visions of advocacy upon entering the program?* • *What were visions of advocacy at the end of Year Two?* • *How did those visions change during the course of the program?* • *How have those visions shifted by the third year of teaching in high-need urban schools?*	**Background data:** Extant program documents **Primary data:** Capstone projects Teacher-selected artifacts Interview #1 Observation #1 Focus group #3
How does an effective teacher who was prepared in a program centered within a framework of cultural relevance enact his or her vision as an advocate? *Situations such as:* • *Standardized testing* • *School/community events* • *End-of-year academic tasks* • *End-of-year social activities*	**Primary data:** Teacher-selected artifacts Observation #1 Interview #2 Observation #2 Observation #3 Interview #3 Focus group #1 Focus group #2
How does an effective teacher who was prepared in a program centered within a framework of cultural relevance resist traditional teacher roles and sustain his or her own evolving vision as an advocate?	**Primary data:** Interview #1 Interview #2 Interview #3 Focus group #1 Focus group #2 Focus group #3

Documents and Artifacts

Documents and materials collected during the course of the participants' participation in the teacher preparation program were analyzed to establish context, a background source for this study, one that is relevant and useful for crafting questions, guiding investigation, and corroborating other data (Yin, 2009). Background data within the program archives including admission interview questionnaires and notes, writing samples, and course documents and assignments provided data that shed light on the development of the participants' visions from their start in the program. Participant nomination survey data was another source of background data that provided additional insight into the work of the participants from the perspectives of their colleagues.

Extant data available from the program archives, the participants' multimedia capstone projects, were a primary data source, providing background information on the participants' visions and experiences as advocates during the time in which they were first-year teachers and master's students in the UACM program. The capstone projects were digital storytelling assignments designed as an opportunity for the candidates to synthesize their own learning from the second year of the program and to apply their learning to their own beliefs and goals related to being empowered educators. Specifically, candidates were charged with connecting seven major projects within the master's program coursework requirements to National Board of Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) and to their own visions for themselves as empowered educators. The purposeful process of creating democratic learning communities where teachers and students are co-learners was the goal of the program. "Ultimately, the process empowers teachers to transform traditional approaches so that students develop as critical thinkers, inspired learners, skilled workers, and involved citizens" (Program document). The 10-

12 minute videos were presented by the candidates publicly at a gathering to celebrate completion of their master's degree at the end of the second year of the UACM program.

Analysis of the capstone video assignments provided confirmation that the participants did have visions in mind for their role as teacher to include advocacy as they began their teaching careers, and provided snapshots of the visions for their roles as teachers at the end of the two-year program, which was at the end of their first year as teachers of record in their classrooms. My analysis of the capstone projects guided my questions for the first interview, as I sought to understand the participants' visions for themselves as empowered teachers, as well as served as a stimulus during the first interview for dialogue related to enactment, resistance, and maintenance of the participants' visions of teacher advocates.

Interviews

Yin (2009) argued that interviews are the most important sources for case study information. Each participant engaged in three semi-structured interviews, each up to 50 minutes in length, with questions focused and crafted to address lines of inquiry developed as we moved through the study together. Questions for the initial interview were crafted based on elements of the elite interview strategy, and a stimulus response strategy guided the second half of the interview (Merton, Lowenthal, & Kendall, 1990; Peterson, Bennet, & Sherman, 1991).

Elite interviewees are individuals who are generally considered to have expert information related to the research questions. The elite interview strategy forefronts the status of the interviewee, placing them in a position to support their own status (Peterson, et al., 1991). This approach was appropriate for the initial interview, since the participants were aware from the initial contact that they had been selected for participation due to their reputations as effective teachers with diverse students. Preparing background information on the interviewees prior to

the discussion and employing open-ended questions gave the participants room to share their expertise, adding important information to the interview process (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). Opening questions during the initial interview of this study were preceded by a statement acknowledging the fact that the participants were respected as effective teachers for diverse students and followed with open-ended questions related to the participants' vision for their work. To further focus the initial interviews on aspects of the participants' visions for their work as effective teachers, we watched their capstone videos together and examined the self-selected artifacts that the participants brought to the interviews to illustrate their work as teacher advocates before discussing the remaining interview questions (Appendix E).

The second interview was scheduled after the first full-day observation, and the third interview was conducted after the final two self-selected school-related observations. These interviews were semi-structured and targeted toward understanding how the participants viewed, enacted, and sustained advocacy within their school contexts both within their own classrooms and within situations beyond their immediate classrooms. Questions for the second interview were targeted toward understanding aspects of the participants' work that I observed during the full-day observations, which lasted 7-8 hours per observation, while questions during the final interview addressed the two observations that each participant selected for me (Appendices F & G). Results of analysis of the data collected at each phase of the study guided the subsequent inquiries. I documented this process within data summary tables and analytic memos within my reflexive notebook in order to keep my data collection targeted and organized and to make the data-collection-to-research-question-connection transparent (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002).

Observations

Ladson-Billings (1995) argued that the understanding of classroom practices must begin in classrooms; furthermore, multiple and varied observations of culturally relevant practice in action are called for in research on teacher education (Hollins & Guzman, 2005; Sleeter, 2008; Young, 2010). My study design included three observations of the participants in settings related to their teaching practice over the course of a five-month period during the spring semester of their second year of teaching. Variation of the observations occurred as the participants made their own selections regarding the second and third observations, a process that revealed their priorities and understandings regarding their teaching practices and provided access to additional contextual data related to their teaching.

I began my observations by spending a full school day (7-8 hours) in each of the classrooms of the participants. The other two observations were of school-related events that were selected and scheduled by participants during school or at some other time that they felt demonstrated their work as effective teachers for diverse students outside of the classroom. Self-selected events that I observed included: student-led conferences, afterschool soccer games, a Black history month assembly, a STEM design-build project, a school-sponsored 5k run, honors presentations, a Girl Scout meeting, and an onsite wildlife experience. Pre- and post- observation check-ins occurred either electronically or in real-time based on the participants' requests, giving the participants opportunities to engage in the research process through reflection and dialogue, a process that illuminates *theory in motion* as teachers have the opportunity to stop and think about their practices, engage in dialogue about their work, and then return to repeat the process (Johnson, Oppenheim, & Suh, 2009). The check-ins were opportunities for establishing specific contextual details, for answering questions, for follow-up, and for scheduling future

observations. In addition, the check-ins provided opportunities for ongoing member checking, as I confirmed and clarified my observations immediately and reviewed ongoing analysis with the participants as the observations progressed, and each observation served as a touchstone for the follow-up interviews.

The participant observations were conducted at the site of each case, scheduled with the participants at their convenience during the spring semester. I made detailed field notes throughout the observations using a computer when appropriate and paper and pen at other times, revising and fleshing out the field notes within 48 hours of each observation to produce expanded field notes (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011). I use a dual-column format to facilitate recording accurate and detailed descriptions of the observations on the left side of the page, reserving the right side of the page for reactions, questions, and ideas that occurred during the observations. My observations were holistic in nature, and I made notes on actions and details such as the participants' behaviors and interactions, the classroom and school setting, and the instructional strategies and materials used during instruction.

Focus Groups

Focus groups were opportunities for all of the participants to come together to share their ideas and opinions about their experiences envisioning, enacting, and sustaining their work as advocates for diverse students, experiences that directly related to the research questions. The social nature of a focus group is beneficial for sparking natural interactions while allowing the researcher flexibility to explore lines of questioning that may emerge unexpectedly (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). Within this study these were also times for member checking as participants reviewed initial results of the study for accuracy and for contributing to revision and additional interpretations for the evolving data analysis (Athanases & De Oliveira, 2008; Stake, 2006).

Privacy was addressed within the focus group protocol. Participants who wished to share information related to acts of advocacy directly with me had the option to contact me privately at any time after the completion of the focus groups. The focus groups took place in person at restaurant locations of the participants' choice, and they coincided with the end of spring standardized testing and end-of-school activities. The final focus group took place on the GSU campus, and it was the final opportunity for data collection and for the group to jointly review and react to initial findings.

The first two focus groups were intentionally planned for weeks that coincide with spring testing and end-of-year activities (Appendices H & I). Because the school district regulations required that researchers be out of the schools after the end of March, it was not possible to conduct observations of those important annual elementary school time periods. Spring standardized testing is a major and culminating event that takes place during a two-week period in April. Although every grade level does not participate in the testing, every grade and each student and teacher are affected, because schedules and routines are adjusted, building access and noise is restricted, and school announcements are centered on testing. During the focus group discussions participants shared instances of advocacy related to testing such as: providing accommodations, scheduling, test administration, and testing preparation. Focus group discussions centered on end-of-year teaching experiences included discussion of field day and honors day activities. The first two focus groups were scheduled during those eventful and often intense timeframes in order to give participants opportunities to share challenges and instances of advocacy. This method of data collection was appropriate for this particular point in my study, because I did not have the advantage of being able to actually observe instances of advocacy on which to base my questioning, and the group dynamic encouraged interaction.

A third focus group discussion including all of the participants was the final opportunity for data collection, and it included member checking of initial findings (Appendix J). A display of artifacts related to the UACM program including program and institutional documents, and course and practicum materials, including textbooks, syllabi, and handbooks, and photographs of cohort activities, was available for the purpose of stimulating memories about the participants' years in the program (Athanases & DeOliveira, 2008). Before beginning the discussion, the group silently interacted with the artifacts to recall personal memories or thoughts from the years in which they were involved with the UACM program (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004).

Data Management

Extensive quantity and varied means of data gathering are means through which I attained intimate familiarity with the participants in order to gain deep understandings of their individual work and lives as teachers and to develop a convergent line of inquiry (Charmaz, 2007; Yin, 2009). Creation of a case-study database, the second data collection principle evident in quality case study work according to Yin (2009), was important to my study design to guide and organize the collection of a large variety and amount of data over the course of the study.

Data Collection Planning and Organization

Purposeful data collection and organization tools that made up my case-study database were: a case-study protocol, data organizational tables, and field notes and reflective writing, all gathered into a reflexive journal. A case-study protocol (Yin, 2009) is an overview of all of the procedures, questions, protocols, and reporting guidelines used within the study. Within this study a case study protocol served to guide data collection within each case and to establish a trail of evidence helpful for my own reflection and peer review. Data collection tables provided visual organization of data sources, connections to the research questions, and collection

activities (Anfara et al., 2002). Charts for visually associating data sources with purposes (Appendix A) and representing the roles of the participants and the researcher thoughout the course of the study (Appendices B and C) are included.

Field notes with associated reflections and analytical memos were opportunities for me to write for discovery and important for reflecting and guiding data collection as the study progressed (Charmaz, 2007). Charmaz argued that writing for discovery before writing to report findings is a productive practice that strengthens data. "Writing for discovery engages writers in actions through which they learn what they are going to say. Writing for discovery is active, emergent, and open-ended" (Charmaz, 2007, p. 83). Another benefit to writing reflections and analytical memos during the data collection process was that the writing lead to a skepticism that is important for uncovering complicating and multiple realities and perspectives (Stake, 2010). Freeman, deMarris, Priessle, Roulston, and St. Pierre (2007) argued that evidence of skepticism is an important hallmark of quality qualitative research, revealing the researcher's ability to self-critique, to recognize limitations, and to consider alternative explanations.

These data collection planning, management, and reflection tools were collected in a reflexive notebook that was useful during and after data collection for personal reflection, peer debriefing, and, finally, for analysis and description of the data in the final report (Creswell, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Weak representation of data collection procedures have been recognized as a recurring weakness in educational research, and my goal was to strengthen my study though thoughtful planning and reporting of methods and procedures (Anderson & Stillman, 2013; Clift & Brady, 2005; Hollins & Guzman, 2005; Sleeter, 2008). The reflexive notebook established a chain of evidence that strengthened my findings and revealed the nature of data collection procedures. All interviews and focus groups were audio taped, and

pseudonyms were assigned after transcription to assure anonymity. Identifying information on extant documents used for analysis was redacted, and capstone DVDs were removed and replaced within cohort files by the researcher alone. Audio files were stored on password protected, fire-walled computers, and data collected were stored in a locked office. Signed consent forms and subject number lists and data files were kept in a locked university location.

Data Analysis

The reflexive notebook organized the database and constitutes a chain of evidence for collection and analysis. Data collection and analysis occurred simultaneously within my study, spiraling in analytic circles as I collected data, analyzed, and wrote about the work in a recursive, iterative process (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 1998). Using the constant-comparative method of data analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), I used open coding of the data before cycling back through to identify categories and relationships between categories that could constitute a model useful for understanding each case (Creswell, 2013).

Strauss and Corbin (1998) suggest that a minimum of 10 interviews or observations is necessary for building grounded theory. I met with each of my participants at least 10 times during data collection, and I open coded as I proceeded to draw meaning from the data and to make decisions about how best to proceed with data collection. Specifically, I used open coding through the second focus group in order to address research questions 1 & 2. I continued open coding through the third focus group to address research question 3. Returning to the audio transcripts of the interviews was an important part of the analytical process for me, because I wanted to confirm that I was remaining true to the participants' words and meaning as I coded. I explained in an analytic memo from July, 2015,

> Since I was on a long drive today, I listened to the recordings of all of the interviews for the first participant and then the focus groups. Even though I've

> coded all of these data sources, I came up with some additional thoughts from listening to the audio. Of course, the participant's verbal emphasis is missing from the written texts, and this turns out to be important to my understanding of her vision. This is definitely a process I will continue with each participant.

In fact, I listened to all of the audio transcripts a minimum of four times for each participant: 1) to verify the transcript, 2) to review after initial coding, 3) to review after focused coding, and 4) to review as I wrote the profile. This process helped me to feel very close to the participants' words as they were expressed verbally and to be very familiar with the content of the participants' data.

Once all of the data were coded, I cycled back through each individual participant to collapse codes, using focused coding to develop categories (Santana, 2013). A code-mapping chart illustrating the coding process is included (Appendix K). Once I completed analysis of each case, I conducted analysis across cases to build abstractions from the single cases and to serve as more sophisticated explanations for overarching phenomenon: the work of a group of effective teachers who advocate for their diverse students in high-need urban schools.

Member checking of the data and analysis occurred throughout the study in order to strengthen analysis and to establish trustworthiness. Follow-up interviews and focus groups were opportunities for formal member checking, and pre- and post-observation conferences were informal opportunities for participants to react to and to clarify analysis as it progressed within the study.

Trustworthiness

It was my intention to conduct a study that adhered to the four research goals that support trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. I designed the study to include multiple means to specifically address the goals, and I developed and maintained a

reflexive notebook, an activity that supports all four of the trustworthiness goals (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Credibility

Credibility of findings in naturalistic research is achieved through processes that interpret phenomenon while at the same time taking into account multiple contextual factors (Guba, 1981). Procedures built into this study design that led to credible findings include: multiple data sources, persistent observation, member checking, and peer debriefing.

Multiple data sources. Incorporating data collected from a variety of methods and sources is another technique used for verifying the credibility of findings. Data collected and analyzed for this study included documents and artifacts, three individual interviews with each participant, three scheduled school-related observations, and three focus groups interviews. The various methods of data collection within each case combined with the varying perspectives of the participants across cases yielded evidence that confirmed the findings (Creswell, 2013; Guba, 1981).

Persistent observation. Persistent observation supports credibility when the researcher gains understandings about the characteristics of a phenomenon through close contact (Creswell, 2013; Guba, 1981). I built relationships with the participants by spending time one-on-one during the initial interview and subsequently during two additional interviews and three observations within their school contexts. Creswell (2013) contends that learning the culture of the participant and building trust are important in claims of persistent observation. My experience as an elementary teacher and, recently, as a supervisor of student teachers gave me background knowledge that facilitated my understandings of the participants' school cultures and served as common ground on which to build trust.

Member checking. Member checking, a procedure that Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue is the most critical methodological technique for establishing credibility, took place formally, informally, and continuously throughout the study during interviews, pre- and post-observation debriefs, during the focus group meetings, and finally, as participants read and commented on the findings for their own cases. Clarifying and confirming the representations of the participants' experiences was of utmost importance to ensuring that the research questions were addressed adequately, and so I involved the participants throughout data collection and analysis, and sought their feedback on the final write-up of the findings for their case. All four of the participants engaged in member checking, and three of the participants provided specific feedback to improve on their own section of the findings.

Peer debriefing. Peer debriefing, or revealing elements of the developing study to a neutral peer for honest critique and feedback, is valuable for uncovering underlying bias and meanings, testing out initial hypotheses and emerging design, and releasing tensions related to the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I employed peer debriefing by meeting with a fellow doctoral student, Carla Tanguay, during the course of data collection, analysis, and writing of the report to share my progress and any dilemmas that arose (Appendix L).

Transferability

In addition to attention to credibility, incorporating practices such as purposeful sampling and thick description increase possibilities for transferability of the findings to other contexts and are supportive of trustworthiness (Guba, 1981; Geertz, 1973; Stake, 2006). I attempted to provide enough description, so that other researchers could compare the context of this study with their own and make determinations about conducting a similar study.

Purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling was accomplished in this study through intentional selection of participants who met the criteria that reflected the purpose of my study: to understand the development and work of effective teacher graduates who were advocates for their students in high-need urban schools. I selected as participants graduates of the UACM program who were identified as effective teachers, also attempting to select participants who were teaching in different contexts, since this strategy maximized the potential for range and variety of data (Guba, 1981; Stake, 2006). The participants taught at four different schools within two different metro-area school districts.

Thick description. My study included rich description of the details evident throughout the data collection activities, a feature of quality research that scholars have repeatedly called for in studies of teacher education (Hollins & Guzman, 2005; Sleeter, 2008). Bailey (2007) suggested that researchers provide descriptions in field notes that are meticulously detailed so that sections of the notes can be incorporated in the final analysis to help the reader visualize the process of the study. She argued that vivid descriptions should create verisimilitude; narratives that transport the reader back to the site of the research. With sufficient information from reading the study, readers should be able to make decisions about the possibility of transferring the findings or the study design to other contexts (Geertz, 1973). My field notes include detailed descriptions of the school and classroom contexts of each participant, in addition to details about the interactions and activities I observed. Also, field notes and memos added contextual detail to interviews and focus group procedures and outcomes. I attempted to achieve verisimilitude within the profiles of my participants by using the rich details from my data collection.

Dependability

Dependability is another criterion to which naturalistic researchers adhere in order to establish the trustworthiness of their work, specifically to satisfy a perception of consistency in the findings. The concept of consistency is complicated within the naturalistic paradigm, since its inherent rejection of naïve realism necessitates that multiple realities, changing perceptions, and human error are inevitable within research studies. Guba states,

> Thus, for the naturalist, the concept of consistency implies not invariance (except by change) but trackable variance—variance that can be ascribed to sources: so much for error, so much for reality shifts, so much for increased instrumental proficiency (better insights), and so on (1981, p. 81).

Within my study I have incorporated the use of overlapping methods, the creation of an audit trail, and the conduction of a dependability audit to support consistency or dependability in the findings.

Overlapping methods. Overlapping methods were accomplished though the inclusion of document analysis, individual and focus group interviews, and observations. Uncovering consistent results through each of the data collection methods strengthened the dependability of my findings.

Audit trail. An audit trail supports dependability by detailing all research activities related to the study and providing the information necessary for an external dependability auditor to examine and critique the research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I created an audit trail by keeping a reflexive notebook that includes a case study protocol, data organizational tables, field notes and reflective writing, and details of the data analysis so that an auditor was able to evaluate the process of decision-making within the study.

Dependability audit. A dependability auditor examines an audit trail to determine whether the processes within the inquiry are sound (Guba, 1981). I scheduled a dependability audit with a peer debriefer after the completion of my analysis of the data.

Confirmability

Finally, confirmability is concerned with establishing the trustworthiness of a study, because readers want to be assured that the findings of research are derived from the participants in the study and are not the result of researcher bias or influence. For naturalistic researchers the influence of values on research is recognized as not only inevitable, but also desirable, and rather than attempt to achieve pure neutrality, the researcher reflects on and reveals subjectivities within the study (Bailey, 2007). Attention is then shifted from scrutinizing the inquirer's objectivity to focusing on the credibility of the data itself. Simply put, the researcher wants the reader to feel that the data are believable.

The use of multiple methods of data collection to confirm findings, documents, individual and focus groups, and observations, strengthened the credibility of my study, and those multiple methods were described earlier. Two other steps I included in my research design to strengthen credibility of the findings were: acknowledging my own subjectivities (see section following) and arranging for a confirmability audit. I scheduled a confirmability audit at the conclusion of the study with a peer debriefer in order to certify that the data and methods of analysis used within my study supported the findings (Guba, 1981).

Researcher's Role

My relationship to the participants in this study was limited to incidental contact, since I had not met the 35 members of the cohort from which my participants were selected prior to my employment as grant coordinator for the UACM program. When I began work in my current

position, the candidates were completing their certification and poised to take their first positions as teachers of record in high-need urban schools. I did not teach any of their courses or support their field experiences for either the first or second year of their program participation. For two of the potential participants, I came to my work with them from an outsider or etic perspective.

I engaged briefly with two of the participants in my study for six weeks during the summer after their certification as graduate research assistants. One of those candidates then took a position at the partner school for the grant that I coordinate. Through my work at the partner school throughout the past year, we had developed a cordial and respectful relationship, and she has been helpful in supporting UACM-related requests.

Because of the nature of UACM program, relatively small, close-knit cohorts typically of 25 to 30 students who stay connected to the program in part due to purposeful efforts by faculty to remain in contact with alumnae and alumni, I have observed that graduates identify with other graduates and current students. Many of the UACM alumnae and alumni eventually serve as mentor teachers and act as contacts for program faculty within schools. This generally collegial relationship along with my knowledge of the program and the faculty gave me an insider's or emic stance. In addition, as a veteran elementary school teacher for ELs with very recent classroom experience, I had a foundation on which to build trust and communication.

As a staff member within the UACM program, my relationship to the program and individuals within the cohort group was certainly emic. I have a great appreciation for the work of the faculty who designed the program and continue to work hard to maintain and improve it, as well as the university that supports the important mission of preparing teacher for work in high-need urban schools. As the researcher in this study, I approached the participants and the program from which they graduated with a perspective of care, an ethic that Noddings (1986)

argued is conducive not only to teaching, but also to powerful teacher education and research. Research for education should, in fact, include notions of collegiality and community. Choosing research questions that benefit all stakeholders leads to research *for* teaching rather than research *on* teaching, and has the potential to benefit individual growth as well as to support the community (Noddings, 1988). "The central method of ethical caring is a faithful search for understanding of the subjective aspects of experience" (Noddings, 1988, p. 501-502). My goal was to understand the experiences of four effective teachers who graduated from the UACM program and to use those experiences to benefit teacher educators, their student teachers, and, ultimately, the children we all serve. The results of my work with the teachers who participated in my study is presented in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

> *If we want to grow as teachers -- we must do something alien to academic culture: we must talk to each other about our inner lives -- risky stuff in a profession that fears the personal and seeks safety in the technical, the distant, the abstract.*
>
> Palmer, *The Courage to Teach,* 2007

In this chapter I present the findings from the study that I conducted for the purpose of understanding how a group of effective teachers working in urban, high-need schools enacted their visions for their work as advocates for their students. Furthermore, I explored ways that they sustained their visions while resisting professional weathering forces that have traditionally worn down teachers' visions and in many cases driven them from their work in high-need schools and even from the profession itself.

I analyzed the data for the purpose of answering my research questions:

1. How do effective teachers who were prepared in a program centered within a framework of cultural relevance envision their roles as advocates?
2. How do effective teachers who were prepared in a program centered within a framework of cultural relevance enact their visions as advocates?
3. How do effective teachers who were prepared in a program centered within a framework of cultural relevance resist traditional teacher roles and sustain their own evolving visions as advocates?

My participants selected the following pseudonyms: Susie, Michelle, Lola, and Jordan, and they generously shared their classrooms and inner lives during our work together. I have attempted to honor them by presenting findings to my research questions in a way that highlights their personalities and acknowledges their individual backgrounds and experiences while also

communicating details rich enough to give readers a *sense of place* as well as a *sense of direction*. Each case includes information highlighting personal educational experience and journey to teaching, classroom and school context, nomination and recruitment to the study, and findings related to the research questions.

Susie

I'm the kind of person who up until recently, before I came into the UACM program, was really okay just drifting along in life in a sense. I was in bad relationships, because I just didn't find myself having a voice to get out of them. I had been living abroad for a while, so my mom and I kind of lost contact, but I was home because I had run out of money in South America but was planning to move back to Australia.

So, I came home and I was working nonstop, and I was having this conversation with my mom. I was asking her to loan me $1,000, so that I could pay off my credit card bill and buy my plane ticket to Australia. And I was like, "I'll pay you back when I get there." And she was like, "No, I'm not going to, because you said you were going to pay me back first, and I'm holding you to that." And then we got on this conversation about it, and she was like, "I am not the boss of your life. You are in charge, but I think you need to realize that you are the one who is in charge of your life. No one is going to make you happy but you." And I think she saw through my unhappiness and was really speaking very truly. "No one is going to make you happy. We can't make you happy. Moving to new places can't make you happy. Your job isn't going to make you happy unless you can make yourself happy. You are the one who holds that power. You just need to think about the choices that you make." At the time I was like, "Ugh, mom." You know?

But I think about that a lot, and that's advice I've given other people. It's so true. You have to believe you have the power to change your life and hold yourself accountable for the kind of life you want. Once I actually did move to Australia, what she had said to me was sitting in my head the entire six months that I lived there. And finally I was like, "Yep, I'm leaving."

Education and Background

"I honestly can't remember my third-grade teacher," admitted Susie, a Caucasian woman in her late 20s, "Isn't that weird?" Although Susie did not recall a great deal about her own elementary-school experience, she noted that the memories she did have were powerful. "I do remember little things," she said.

> I remember a girl who was the smartest in the class. We had each done a project, and I had actually gotten a higher grade than her because I put in a lot of work on my fifth-grade project on World War II. And it's nothing big, but the teacher called out the other girl's name saying she got a better grade, and that just made me feel like she just didn't know that I put in all this work. And she didn't correct

> herself, and I didn't say anything of course. You know what I mean? I actually got the higher grade, but she called out someone else's name.

Her own vivid snapshot memories of her experiences and feelings in elementary school fueled the empathy that Susie felt for children and the care with which she treated them. She had worked with young children as a nanny in positions outside of the United States as well as with a children's publishing group, giving her multiple experiences with children as well as traveling and living on several different continents. Susie described her personality as "outgoing, determined, and independent," characteristics she felt were developed through her international experiences. Her experience living abroad was also influential in her interactions with the parents and families of students, giving her a deep understanding of the impact of linguistic and cultural barriers.

Susie earned a double major in English and psychology at a large university in the United States and a master's degree in children's literature at an international university prior to applying for the UACM program. An excellent student, she earned Dean's List status and was awarded for her graduate work in children's literature.

Journey to Teaching

"I had a great mentor who guided me to teaching," stated Susie. She explained,

> While I was in school in Vancouver, working on my children's literature degree, it dawned on me that I wanted to spend my life around kids and working in a publishing house would never be that fulfilling for me. I felt that I might be well-suited for teaching, and because my degree was interdisciplinary, I had the opportunity to take some education courses, and that is when I discovered what education is all about.

Extensive travel and positive experiences with young children were factors that Susie credited for her awareness of and interest in different cultures and in teaching young children from diverse backgrounds, leading her to apply for admission to the UACM program.

While Susie admitted in her UACM program selection interview that she did not know a lot about urban schools and communities, she was able to identify many of the challenges frequently found in urban-school environments such as parental involvement, language and socioeconomic differences, parental awareness and educational background, and students' abilities, self-esteem, and comfort. "Every child deserves a good experience in school," stated Susie during her program interview, and she expressed confidence that she was "prepared to interact with children," and that she was "interested in the research and background for urban communities."

"As an Atlanta native, my roots to this city have given me the desire to teach in my community and to create a classroom environment that is both encouraging and stimulating for students," Susie wrote in her application goals statement. She described her vision for her influence as a teacher of urban students,

> Through clear expectations, a shared belief that every child can succeed, and a foundation of respect and appreciation, I believe that the elementary teacher can create a powerful learning experience that can stay with a child through high school and beyond.

Susie explained how she felt the UACM program would support her development as a teacher,

> I am looking forward to benefiting from the direct and hands-on approach towards pedagogy. I know that I will succeed in the program due to the focus on mentoring while instructing and the continued support of professional development. As I want to teach in urban environments throughout my career, I am pleased and excited to see the specificity and care that the program takes towards genuinely knowing and understanding the unique challenges that needs of both teachers and students within the urban classroom.

Susie completed her preparation program and accepted a position as a classroom teacher at one of the schools in which she interned.

Classroom and School Context

"As much as I've been around kids," exclaimed Susie, "I guess I still had a really naïve idea of what a teacher does. I never thought they worked this hard! I wish they'd told you that before," she said laughing. Susie was a third-grade teacher completing her second year of teaching in an urban high-need school at the time this study was conducted. "I've had to be more forgiving of myself this year," explained Susie. Although her first year of teaching was also in third grade, Susie explained that the current year's experience was very different and more difficult for her for a number of reasons.

> I'm getting better in ways that I didn't get better last year. I'm being pushed as an educator in different ways, so when things that were successful last year don't measure up, I have to remind myself, "Yes, but you didn't have someone throwing stuff, so of course that lesson didn't work." But you know, there are different successes.

Susie had been assigned to teach the special education inclusion class, and behavioral and academic challenges required constant vigilance to support 25 students, ten of whom had Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and all of whom spoke Spanish as their first language.

> We had a really awesome class last year, and in a lot of ways I feel like we were a really cohesive group in a way that this year it's not quite as cohesive. One reason is that half of them are pulled out for resource two times a day, so a lot of the main instruction occurs with people out of the class. We have a lot of interruptions to our day, either due to behavior or people coming in or schedules changing, so it's not just me and my kids anymore, and I feel like that kind of helps you have a really close-knit community, but I love my support and I need my support. So it's going well, but it's just a little bit different.

In fact, the first meeting I had with Susie, she warned me that she had a new student with severe behavioral issues who had recently come to her class. The child was in foster care, and her schooling had been interrupted repeatedly, gaps and short stays at various schools had prevented her from consistent and comprehensive analysis for support services, and she was currently only eligible for 30 minutes per day of consultative special education support. Susie wanted me to

understand that this situation might impact the full-day observation that I would conduct for the study. Working with students whose challenges included linguistic, learning, and behavioral issues required a great deal of differentiation, documentation, and collaboration with educational support faculty members.

> I would say, having the inclusion class this year and having some pretty severe behaviors was challenging. It definitely took my focus away from the instruction that I was able to achieve the first year, it became a focus on behavior and making sure kids will be respectful and still able to learn even when somebody is having a really, really rough time in the corner. So that was rough.

Adding difficulty to the challenges of the class itself was a change in the make-up of her grade-level team from her first year of teaching. Susie explained,

> I had a really great, cohesive team last year, but my two that I planned with every week who really made my first year so great, one got moved to another grade and one was on leave for half of the year, and although she's back, and she's wonderful, we just haven't gotten in routine of planning. So, I've kind of been in my own little world this year. A tiny part of that I'm thankful for because I was really afraid coming in not having that support network, so in a sense I definitely feel like I could make it. I could move to another school, or they could leave, and I would be fine, but it's, yeah, super frustrating and very disappointing to have a team that I sometimes I don't really respect.

A challenging group of students combined with grade-level teammates that were not working well to support each other made Susie's second year especially difficult.

Susie's classroom, located near the end of a long hallway on the first floor of the school building, was typical for classrooms built in the 1950s. Despite limited storage, Susie had organized her books and materials so that they were accessible and easily replaced. An extensive classroom library with books divided into reading levels and identified by colored dots dominated wall space under the room length windows, and open shelves were neat, with books intentionally displayed in labeled buckets. Student work such as Mary McLeod Bethune "wanted posters" and graphic organizers were displayed on every wall as well as the windows. Content-

area vocabulary, general vocabulary, and child-friendly standards for mathematics and English language arts were posted. There were two desktop computers, one for student use, and the other at the teacher's desk attached to the interactive white board. Desks were arranged in groups of five, two pairs facing each other and one desk on the end.

Susie's school, a Title I elementary school located within a high-need metropolitan district outside of Atlanta, was built nearly 70 years ago, and consisted of a patchwork of sprawling corridors and buildings that had been added throughout the decades to accommodate ever-increasing student populations. The school complex was perched on a hill with indoor and outdoor stairways, sidewalks, and dirt paths, connecting the various parts of the school. Originally built to accommodate residents of the immediate neighborhood, parking was difficult to find during school hours, and many parents and students walked to and from the school within a neighborhood that was made up primarily of densely populated apartments and a few modest single-family homes. Ninety-one percent of the student body identified as Hispanic, while 3% of the students identified as Black, 3% as Other, 1% as Asian, and 1% as White.

Nomination and Recruitment to the Study

"She models respect and respects her students, and works with the students to help build their confidence and to encourage them to communicate thoughts and feelings," wrote one UACM faculty member who nominated Susie as an effective teacher for diverse students. Faculty members commented positively about her instructional planning and strategies, her responsive classroom practices, her professionalism, and her leadership abilities. She "really works to make the classroom experience positive and fair" wrote another faculty member. "She conducts morning meetings and provides consistent guidance," stated yet another. They described her as a lifelong learner, noting that she was already participating in a research study at

another university and was preparing to present her own classroom research at a national conference. One faculty member noted that she "seems to have maintained learned UACM beliefs and criteria in her classroom setup and implementation of teaching and learning."

Prior to contacting Susie to invite her to participate in the study, I paid a personal visit to her principal at the principal's request to explain the study and to answer questions she had. "Susie is one of the best teachers I have in the building," stated the principal after I identified my institutional affiliation and explained that I was assembling a pool of participants for a study of effective teachers. She welcomed me to contact Susie about participating in the study. I contacted Susie by email at the end of January to invite her to participate in the study, and we met soon after to discuss the study and to go over and sign the informed consent.

I met with Susie a total of 8 different times between February 1 and May 28, 2015 for six personal and focus group interviews and three observations. The observations included one full-day classroom visit, and two self-selected events: a) student-led conference night and b) classroom awards day. Because the classroom awards day occurred after the March 31 observation deadline required by the district in which Susie worked, she took pictures and video clips of the event, showed them to me, and discussed the event in depth. In addition, Susie responded to several emails and met with me one additional time for clarification and member checking.

Care + Belief = Teaching without Boundaries

"I think that I really care about all of my students," Susie quickly replied when I asked her why she thought others viewed her as an effective teacher. She relayed a conversation she had engaged in recently about her effectiveness as a teacher.

> My boyfriend's dad is an engineer, and he's in academia, and he was asking me, "Why do you think you're a good teacher?" or "Why do you think that your kids

> listen to you?" So I got really nervous, since that was the first time that I'd met him. I gave similar answers that I think they know that I care about them, and that I really do believe that they can all succeed.

Susie's commitment to caring sprang from her belief that every child has the potential for success and that children in urban classrooms often encounter adults working in their schools and communities who neither believe in their potential nor care about their future lives. She expressed these beliefs in her writing sample essay.

> To be a successful teacher in any classroom, one needs to be aware of any social, economic, or educational challenges that each student faces, but also have an inherent belief that every child can rise above. However, I believe that to work in an urban classroom, a teacher needs to hold these values above all others.

Susie's intense commitment to each student was evident in how much time she spent thinking about each of her students, in the ways that she spoke to them, and in the things that she did for her students and their families. "I wholeheartedly believe that every child has the potential and the right to learn in an exciting, engaging, and respectful classroom," she wrote in her application goals statement.

I came to associate the notions of caring and belief with Susie as I collected and analyzed data, and I found that in her case it was practically impossible to untangle the two concepts. Susie cared deeply about every aspect of her students' lives, because she believed that her words and actions were powerful, and that they would influence her students' growth beyond the boundaries of her classroom. She explained,

> I'm not married. I don't have children of my own, and I have a lot of time to devote to my craft, especially in the first few years. But it just has really struck me, even this year sometimes, that people don't always care about their kids, and so I think because I care a lot – and sometimes that's a fault of mine – that colors the way that I teach and how I handle situations differently than other people. I've been told before that I'm very patient, especially with some of the special ed ones that I have this year. I've definitely gotten better about that this year, but it's because I care about them beyond my classroom. I think it's valuable to take the

> time and teach them strategies that – in addition to multiplication and everything, but that are going to be helpful for their life skills later.

For Susie the concept of care was not just a warm and passive feeling. Rather her approach to caring was proactive and vibrant, giving her a powerful presence. Transitive verbs such as: *pushed, impacted, shaped, created, and transformed* from Susie's Capstone Video project were demonstrated during my observations as she went about her work advocating for her students.

When a colleague suggested that a "teacher is not just a teacher," Susie responded, "Absolutely!" Susie's approach to advocacy was a logical progression for her: She actively cared for each of her students and saw this work as a worthwhile investment of her energy and time, because of her core belief that all children are valuable and capable of success. Active caring led to an expanded vision of teaching, a vision of advocacy as teaching beyond boundaries. Those three themes related to her work as a teacher advocate emerged from my analysis of the data associated with Susie: a) advocating through active caring, b) advocating by believing that all children can succeed, and c) advocating by teaching beyond boundaries.

Theme One: Advocating through Actively Caring

Susie expressed her vision of active caring as part of her role as a teacher advocate in her program admission interview and documents. "Through understanding, teachers and classrooms can become places of emotional growth as well intellectual growth," she argued. "Ask them a lot of questions; take a real interest in each child," she stated as ways for teachers to connect to diverse students. "Know about them. Respect them, and find out about them," she continued. "Highlight the strengths of individuals and how those strengths work in a group," she suggested as a strategy for motivating cooperative work. Susie described her vision for her future classroom as a "forward-moving safe haven" and emphasized her desire to build a classroom

community on a foundation of respect in which she, the teacher, would provide "empathy and understanding." Susie noted the range of caring that she observed within her school context.

> I definitely didn't think that that was something that would be lacking in teachers until I started working, and then I kind of realized that not everyone truly cares about their students and puts their students first. And everyone is different and some people have different stresses that I don't have.

Susie's awareness of her potential influence on her students' lives was a force in her vision for advocating through active caring. In her program interview writing sample, she described the power of a positive school experience in supporting resilience within her students.

> While every child's strengths and difficulties will be unique to them, I as the teacher can turn my classroom into a fun place where children can forget about their troubles, while also learning coping mechanisms. I understand that the classroom is in no way a replacement for counseling or therapy, but I endeavor to teach my students that they can rise above everything. As every child will be coping with something at any given time, the classroom should serve as a positive, forward-moving safe haven where children can learn while also believing that they are strong, resilient individuals.

Susie felt strongly that school experiences continued to impact individuals even into adulthood. She explained,

> Every adult remembers stuff from elementary school. It's a really informative time. I mean I'm sure this happened to you as well. But when I tell people that I've just met that I'm a third-grade teacher, oh my gosh, you instantly hear their third-grade teacher's name, their class, maybe a field trip they went on or how they didn't like their teacher and how they wish their teacher was like you.
>
> I mean just the other day – one of my other behavior problems— really sweet kid. His mom walks to school, and she's my only mom that speaks English, so I actually talk with her quite a lot. I talk with her almost every other day about good stuff and bad stuff, so I'll send her text messages, like, "Look at [student name]. He's doing an amazing job." And she was like, "You know, my third-grade teacher was this person, and he didn't care like you. He just didn't. You just care so much." I was like, "Oh, thank you. I really do."

Susie enacted her vision for advocacy as active caring by being highly attentive to her students' physical and emotional needs and fiercely protective of their academic environment as I present below.

Physical needs. Susie's attentiveness to her students was apparent during my full-day classroom observation as she attended to various physical needs of her students. As students trickled into the classroom in the morning, she noted the ones who were wearing their eyeglasses and those who were not, reminding them in a friendly tone, "They don't live in your backpack. They live on your face." In fact, a third of Susie's students needed eyeglasses, and she had responded to the general confusion surrounding her students' vision needs by creating a chart that showed those that "have glasses" and those that "need glasses."

> There's a big glasses chart there [on the wall], and there are about eight or nine kids that wear glasses. So, gosh, it must've been last semester sometime, it was before they got their eye check in third grade, but somebody had mentioned, "Oh, yeah. I wear glasses. I used to have glasses." I'm like, "Where are they?" "They're broken. I don't know, they're at home."

"I started getting onto them and having the office call home on days when they didn't have [them] and talking to the nurse about getting them glasses," she continued.

> Yeah, so then we do a check in the morning, and the kids actually are good about checking each other, so if I say it to one like, "Where are your glasses?" They'll be like, "Oh yeah, _____, you should go get your glasses."

The problem of misplaced eyeglasses had become such an issue in the classroom that Susie was purchasing child-sized eyeglass cords to have on hand for her eyeglass wearers.

> One student has a little thing around them [eyeglasses], which is great because when he takes them off, and when he's squinting or having trouble focusing, putting on his glasses is no problem. So, I'm going to order about eight more of those little things. I didn't get them for him, he came with them, but they're just so smart. They just stay on your face, and he really needs to be wearing them most of the time, but some of them don't. A lot of them don't wear them at home, and I think most of them have cases, but I think those would be really helpful for

> school, so, I'm going to order some of those, they can't be very expensive, like one dollar I'm sure.

Monitoring and supporting her students' vision needs was one way that Susie actively demonstrated her care for her students.

In addition to daily concern and activity related to the vision needs of her students, Susie monitored her students' clothing for weather appropriateness, an issue during the freezing temperatures that were occurring during the weeks around my full-day observation. "It is an everyday conversation," Susie explained, referring to her to admonitions to her students to wear long pants instead of shorts to school. "Everyone is wearing pants!" she proclaimed proudly during the morning meeting that I observed, and later she explained how she handled the issue with her students,

> For a while when it was not that cold, or when it was too cold, but they didn't realize how cold, we'd talk about it. "Okay, why is it important to be wearing this? Like, even if we don't go out for recess, you're walking." Some of them that are wearing shorts are walkers in the morning and in the afternoon.
>
> But, I mean, I almost started being mean about it. I told them, "I wish we could go outside, but nobody's dressed for the weather. Today's inside recess." Without saying names, but they can tell, and then they started wearing pants. The very next day they started wearing pants. "Good, so you have pants. I've seen you wearing pants. You have them. Be a leader. If your mom says, 'I want you to wear shorts,' say 'No, it's cold, I want to wear pants.' You could do that."

Susie dealt with students who continued to wear shorts after the weather turned cold by discussing their personal agency in dressing themselves and the logical consequence of not dressing warmly during cold weather, a demonstration of her care for their health and wellbeing.

In addition to attending to students' vision needs and clothing, Susie's attentiveness resulted in other acts of caring for physical needs during the full day I spent in her classroom. She provided a snack for one student, walking up to her desk and pointing to a cabinet across the room and saying quietly, "You know where it is." Later, Susie explained,

> She has been complaining quite frequently, like she'll just shut down at the beginning of math and tell me that she's hungry. So, we talked that day about how you can bring a snack. We talked about examples of snacks you can bring that are healthy and that will give you energy.

Later in the morning while Susie was conducting individual reading conferences, she discovered that a student had lice and needed to go to the nurse and subsequently home. “We never had lice in my class last year, it's been twice this year, and I have ended up buying lice shampoo to have on hand when students need it. We had a long conversation about it two weeks ago,” she recalled.

> So two weeks ago, one of my students came in with a note saying that her mom had found lice on her head that morning and asking if she could get checked out, so I ended up teaching in the front entrance hallway for, like, an hour one morning. My entire class got checked, and then two other students were found with lice. So, obviously, you have to have a conversation when your whole class is out there, and so we talked about how it spreads, why it's bad, what you can do to help and what the shampoo does.

Susie advocated for her students by actively caring and attending to her students’ physical needs by monitoring eyeglasses, weather-appropriate clothing, snacks, and lice prevention.

Emotional needs. In addition to actively caring about her students’ physical needs, Susie devoted attention to their emotional well-beings. **“**I do feel like I tend to their emotional needs a ton,” Susie stated.

> I would guess that physical needs are handled fairly well in a school like ours, because there's just an awareness that our kids sometimes don't have food. Emotional needs— I don't know. I feel like I'm constantly watching them for the slightest little – like, if you were sitting here, and your face looks different than it normally looks, I want to talk to you out in the hallway about it. I feel like sometimes teachers don't do that.

Susie’s awareness and concern for the emotional health of children was evident in her interview writing sample when she described her vision of a classroom community supporting students’ emotional growth. She wrote,

> In addition to providing a safe, fun environment where children can escape the outside pressures or trials of their life, a teacher should also encourage the positive role that community can play in overcoming a tragedy or disappointment. By community, I am not suggesting the open discussion of a problem with the entire classroom, but instead a respectful and honest conversation between teacher and student in which the teacher provides empathy and understanding, while also stressing the ability of the child to overcome and succeed no matter the difficulty. In an urban classroom, there might not be a way for a teacher to be aware of all the personal or family problems of every child, but if the belief of "You can succeed no matter what" is pervasive then I feel resilience and overcoming tragedy might easier than originally thought.

Susie considered her role as a teacher to be weighty in the lives of her students, and she expected that her attentiveness toward her students would also extend to their emotional needs. She stated,

> I think about that every day, how much power and influence I have over them, and I think a lot of people in teaching just don't realize that, or don't know it. They must not, based on some of the ways they talk to kids, because if you did—
>
> I mean that sculpts every way that I phrase something. Every way that I handle a situation is that I'm shaping the way that you understand what you did. If it was good or bad or not the right way to handle, this is the opportunity where you're learning how to be a human. It's crazy.

Susie described herself as "a pretty reflective person, in general," a trait that she felt might have been encouraged by her own mother's example. That reflective stance supported her attentiveness to her students' needs. On several occasions Susie commented on how her attentiveness to her students emerged from her care for them. "I think about my kids all the time, and I think about the subtleties that I might have missed that I could have made better," she stated. "I pull kids out in the hallway for everything, good stuff, bad stuff, personal stuff, anything at all," she explained. Susie tuned in to her students' emotional lives, and her empathy for them led her to intervene when necessary and to foster a supportive classroom community.

Empathy. Recalling her own behaviors and experiences as a student in elementary school was a source and motivation for Susie's active caring for her students' emotions. She stated,

> I really think most adults forget their own childhoods and how you just remember adults slighting you in some way. I remember a teacher in second grade or third grade saying something to me that was not mean. It just made me feel not great. You have the power to either build or put down. You should be adding value.

Susie felt that adults' failure to reflect on their own childhoods could lead to neglect of students' emotional needs. She explained,

> I think there's just a big disconnect between adults and children. I don't think it's that they don't respect how kids think or what they're processing. I think it's sometimes just a lack of education or a lack of awareness or remembering that you remember stuff when you're little.

Susie recalled memories of instances from her own elementary years that influenced the ways she interacted with her students.

> I remember getting a lot of my report cards. I mean I did well, obviously. Obviously I did well. I'm insanely smart. *[Laughs]* No, but she [the teacher] always would write that, '[Susie] is great, but she stares out the window a lot.' And now as a teacher I'm like, 'Well, I probably was bored.' I mean I remember we sat at our desks a lot. I probably was a little bored. I don't remember school being hard at all. But, also, I don't remember having a conversation with her about that. So it's little stuff. You know? I wish that she had talked to me about it.
>
> It's not necessarily that those events color the way that I interact. It's that I remember them. It's that it's kind of like a phenomenon to me that you remember such specific moments that in the scheme of your life are probably not the most important moments in your life, but they take you back to that, and you remember exactly how you felt and probably where you were sitting. And we sometimes don't afford kids that they'll remember it, and so we just think that you can say what you want or, 'Oh, they're not really paying attention,' because they are. These are people with feelings and memories, and they're going to become adults. You're responsible for how they're going to interact as adults.

Susie recalled another memory that influenced her care for her students' feelings.

> I always went to daycare up until fifth grade, and I never got in trouble. Obviously, I'm a pleaser. I also loved babies growing up. I still love babies. So, when I was in fourth and fifth grade, I mean those people were my family – the people that worked there. So, after school sometimes, if I had gotten my homework done, they'd let me go to the infant room and just help out.
>
> There was a younger girl, like second or third grade, who wasn't allowed to go see her baby brother, but she really wanted to, and the director asked me not to tell her. 'Don't tell her that you got to see her brother.' But I did, and I remember

> the director was talking to me, and not even in a mean way, but just pulled me aside, and I knew she was disappointed in me, and I remember how terrible I felt about that. So, I remember that feeling for those kids that are like me. When I have to get onto them, sometimes I'll go and apologize later, even though I know it was necessary, because I know it really hurts them to have disappointed me. But, you need to learn, and obviously I never told that girl again. I learned my lesson.

Reflecting on memories of her own elementary school experiences gave Susie insight and empathetic understanding for her students.

Susie also drew on her personal experiences living and working in various countries around the world to anticipate the needs of her students' families. Her awareness of the stress family members might experience due to the challenges of using resources that were generally assumed to be family-friendly, spurred her to organize a family field trip to the public library located near the school. She collaborated with the librarian and a school interpreter to welcome families to the library and to help them sign up for library cards and to use the computers. She noted,

> I would have really loved for them to have sat down and practiced logging on to computer, because I've lived abroad and that's really overwhelming – even if it's free and you can't really make a mistake. It's overwhelming if you don't really know how they work.

Susie's attention to the emotional needs of her own students and other students in the school is evidence of her ability to empathize and her commitment to protecting their feelings.

Classroom community. In addition to empathizing with students and their families, Susie purposefully developed and maintained a cohesive classroom community as a means to care for and support her students' emotional needs, a strategy that was an integral part of her teacher preparation program and one that she recognized could be a challenge to maintain over time. "I think people [in the cohort] started to just sort of faction off in ways that didn't help our group be very cohesive," she recalled of her own UACM cohort. She continued,

> I think that's just human nature. I think you really have to work hard. I think that's probably something I personally see in my classroom. If you want a cohesive classroom environment, it's not something that you can do on day one, and, like, 'I did it!' It's something that you have to work at until the last day of school if you want that to be your thing.

Susie strengthened her classroom community all year by making personal connections to her students' lives and using positive affirmations within morning meetings and end-of-year classroom awards to guide and strengthen her students' self images.

During morning meeting the day of my full-day observation, Susie took time for sharing personal information about her own life to build connections and trust with her students. The students had just been back in school a couple of days after several snow days when school had been called off by the district. Some of the students had not returned the first day school was back in session, because they said they did not know school was open again. Susie explained that she understood why they would be confused and why they might not have known. She went on to tell them that she did not have a TV in her home, and that when she needed to find out about school closings, she used her cell phone. She followed the conversation by demonstrating and encouraging the students to be proactive in helping their parents to find the information.

Throughout the day Susie continued to share aspects of her personal life in order to build connections with her students' lives. During a discussion of a book about Mary McLeod Bethune, Susie brought up the fact that some parents work two jobs and some work at night. She told them about a time in her life when she was working two jobs to make money and explained that sometimes people do this when they are going to college. A school-wide tornado drill was another occasion when Susie shared her personal life with the students, explaining her thought process when choosing a safe place to be in her own home in the event of a tornado warning. Knowing that many of her students did not have access to basement locations, she explained that

her home did not have a basement either, and that she would go to an interior bathroom to protect herself from broken glass and debris. Susie also shared her own experience having lice when she talked to her class about the condition. “I'll lie half the time about [it], if I haven’t had a personal example,” she laughed, “but I really have had lice.” Sharing personal information to demonstrate commonality with her students was one way that Susie strengthened her classroom community and student relationships.

Susie also found numerous ways to build personal encouragement into her classroom community to support her students’ self-esteem. She expressed her wonder at the influence she had over her students’ images of themselves and each other, “For even just that second, if you can change the way that either their peers view them or that they view themselves— It almost makes me want to cry to think I have power over that. It’s just so profound.” During the morning meeting, a student reminded Susie that they had not read “encouraging words” from the day before. Susie pulled several notes out of a large, painted box to read to the class. Several of the notes were compliments addressed to her, and one was addressed to the entire class. It read, “You are the best class!” Susie reminded the group that they should write encouraging words to each other, and then pulled out some student-to-student notes to read.

Susie admitted that she manipulated her classroom in positive ways to encourage students and to get results she desired. One strategy that she used was to pull a student into the hall for a personal talk. She explained,

> If people are kind of working but maybe getting off task, I'll pull somebody who's doing a great job out in the hallway, so the rest of the class is like, “Oh man, she's getting onto somebody, I'd better get to work.” And, then, I'm telling that person, “What a great job you're doing! You're just being a leader when other kids are talking.” And they'll come back in feeling pretty proud, but the rest of the kids are like, “I'd better get to work.” I’m totally manipulating the situation at times, but it's like being positive, but still getting the reward that you want.

A table cluster point system was another classroom strategy that Susie used as a means to provide positive reinforcement and encouragement to students in her class. “My point system, is pretty just nonsense,” she laughingly explained.

> If I feel like a team has low morale, I'll add points after they leave, so they can win, and all they win is having lunch with me, so, they don't win prizes. I like it too, because you get to know them. But, if one team's winning over and over, and the other teams aren't getting along, I'll add points. Giving a point, like, “It’s a vocabulary word! Love it! Point for you!”

Superlative classroom awards provided Susie with another opportunity to encourage her students and strengthen their classroom community and self-esteem. She explained,

> We do a school wide awards day that just has perfect attendance and principal’s list and honor role. And there are all the stipulations, like in order to get an award that you have to have all *A*s in a certain subject, all *B*s. You can’t have *C*s or *D*s. And so I always felt like while we’re celebrating kids that have worked really hard, some kids are never going to get an award.
>
> The only awards I feel like I can manipulate on the school wide days are M*ost Improved in Reading* and *Most Improved in Math*, because there’s not any stipulation on how a teacher can decide that. So in discussing it with my special education teacher – this year, anyways, we’ve chosen one kid that sees her for reading and for math and one kid for me for reading and math. But I love my own awards day.

Classroom awards day was one of Susie’s favorite days of the year, because it was very personal for her classroom community, and she spent hours “pre-thinking,” as she termed it, about how to use the awards to encourage her students and then preparing the voting documents, awards and prizes. She explained,

> About two days before, I write on the board all the awards that we’re getting. We discuss what each one means and we list some behaviors that will go along with it, like – ‘So, *Most Friendly* – what does a *Most Friendly* person do? Or A*lways Smiling* – Does that mean that they’re just smiling, or is it that they have a positive attitude?’ *Bookworm* – because they thought it was somebody who liked a worm, at first, which was very cute... We build it up.

She continued,

> This one package that I got has 30-something awards in it, and most of them are achievement-based, but then there are a few like *Prettiest Eyes,* and I take those out. So I let them vote on everything, and they have a list of the awards and then the list of kids in our class. Not everybody can complete the list in the amount of time, so I say they can take it home. But I only get about half of them back, and I almost immediately throw those out. I kind of look at them to see if there are obvious winners, but then I just kind of do it myself.

She reiterated, "They're awful at voting. They don't understand the system, and I'm like, 'Great! I can't wait to count these!'— in the trash. So, I just decide myself based on what I think each kid should win." She stated,

> I really view it as my last chance to make an impression on them or to give them something before they have the summer, or they're going to fourth grade. It's the very last opportunity that you can build someone's confidence or make them view themselves in a different way. I think the fact that they think that their peers voted for them is really powerful. So, I love to try and trick them like that. I mean, I remind them throughout the presentations, "I was really surprised, but you guys all voted for this person. I was thinking another award for them."

The class awards presentation is a unique event for Susie's students. She described the setting,

> It's the last day of school, because it's kind of part of our party, and so it's very relaxed. We set up the chairs like we're in an auditorium so there are no desks, and we're all looking at the front.

The classroom awards presentation was one of the observations that Susie selected as a demonstration of her advocacy for her students, and she explained how the awards were determined to support her students' self-esteem.

> So my *Who's Who in Reading* – I had two of those. They're not the best readers, but they're ones that have really worked hard, that have grown a lot in their independent reading and that have just become readers when they were very resistant before. *Most Responsible*, everybody voted for this little girl who's just the class mom. She's the first to help anybody who gets hurt or needs help.

Most Athletic, *Future teacher*, and *Hard Worker, and Heading to Hollywood* were some of the other awards presented. Susie explained the background on *Heading to Hollywood*,

> So this student gets called "crybaby" a lot, and building that community where you get to know each other, we were like, "This person can go from smiling to upset really quickly. And that's really important in Hollywood, because you have to really control your emotions." And she was happy that she won. I'm like, "See! That can be a plus, that you can cry like that."

Susie explained how a cohesive classroom community could support the building of her students' self-esteem,

> We have lots of opportunities for them to be positive to each other, like "encouraging words" in our class that we read out once a week. But I just think it can really just kind of shift their mindset about themselves. For one in particular who won a reading award or something, it's great that they can think, "Oh, my gosh! My peers really think I'm a good reader. Maybe I really am a good reader. I do go to special education, but hmm. I have been working hard. I guess I should keep working hard." That's the dialogue that I want them to have in their mind[s].

Susie recognized that the time and attention she devoted to classroom awards for her students was not typical in other classrooms. She explained,

> I think some do [classroom awards]. I don't know if it's the same, and I don't know if there's all the pre-thinking that I put into it. I think another person does awards, and they might have their kids vote, but I think what the kids vote on is what they get, so I don't think there's as much manipulation. I don't think so, though. I don't think there's a lot.

Susie concluded her description of her classroom awards day,

> And then they actually made me an award. This was a secret. I mean, I knew, because they'd been hiding this paper. But they gave me *Best Teacher Ever*, and they put money together and got me a little water bottle from the dollar store with my favorite candy. It was so sweet, and they know that I love puppies and kittens, so they had mini posters made. So sweet!

Susie envisioned active caring as part of her work as a teacher, and she attended to her students' emotional needs and self-esteem through empathy, personal connections, and a strong classroom community.

Academic environment. Active caring through vigilant protection of and careful attention to her students' academic environment was another avenue through which Susie

advocated for her students. She acknowledged that on occasion she would forgo or minimally participate in suggested activities that she felt were marginally useful for her students' success.

"It really is just out of my different priorities," she explained referring to a "college day" poster that each teacher in the school was asked to create and post in their classrooms. While some teachers prepared elaborate posters featuring school colors and pictures of themselves as college students to celebrate their alma maters, Susie had written on the poster, "We are going to [School Name] University," and then had each of her students sign it.

> I will sit there and make those [Mary McLeod Bethune "Wanted" posters] for my kids, and I bought that chart paper. I will gladly do that, but I will not make a poster for myself and print out a picture of me at college. I want them to get excited, and we've looked at colleges online, but it [college day poster] is not useful for them.

In addition to protecting students' instructional time by minimizing time spent on projects that she felt were not useful, Susie protected their instructional time by making the most of the time she had with them even if it inconvenienced her personally. When her class spent an hour in the lobby of the school building waiting on the nurse to check each of her students' heads for lice, Susie continued to teach in the lobby. She also routinely provided snacks for her students in her classroom to save time. "I know when they go to the nurse the first thing she asks is, 'Well, have you had breakfast?" Susie explained. She continued,

> So, I always have food in the classroom for them, and they know where it is, and it's in that cabinet, and it's just granola bars. So, when anybody complains about a stomach ache, the first thing I ask is, "Have you had breakfast?" And most of the time it's "No," and so then it's like, "Oh, go get a granola bar," and then problem solved, and then you don't have to go to the nurse, because then she'll take them and get food in the cafeteria. All you do is eat while you're learning, and nothing has to happen.

Susie was constantly looking for ways to work around school schedules and protocols to maximize instructional time, and standardized testing windows were periods that were especially challenging. “I've sort of struggled with testing,” she explained.

> My ESOL support isn't always there, and my special ed support isn't always there, so we've been doing hardcore review and reading where we're writing paragraphs. All of a sudden I have 13 kids I didn't account for. They can do the work, but they need someone to sit with them to give them extra support, and I think if we had some differentiated projects going on, then they just carry on. They could be working at anything at any time.

In addition to protecting instructional time, Susie also enriched her students’ academic environment by taking the time to explain important school and extracurricular events, encouraging participation and family involvement. I observed her reading aloud to the students a flyer that was going home with them about a play presentation. She stated,

> I didn't receive an email or any information, but I love the idea. I read it out to my kids, so they would know what it was, but it's like a little play on Friday for the parents to come and see, and I guess it's going to be kind of like a story, but they're teaching them how to assist your child with reading at home in their native language and what that looks like, so that sounds pretty cool.

After school I observed Susie talking with students who remained in the room waiting for their dismissal time. The friendly conversation included an admonition from her that they think about joining chorus the following year. Susie advocated for her students by actively seeking out and seizing opportunities to protect and maximize their academic environment.

Resisting. Susie recognized that her commitment to actively caring for her students in a proactive way was not typical of her colleagues. She stated, “It's like some of them are pedagogically strong, but sometimes their caring seems to stop way before mine does.”

> You're thinking about [the students] all the time. If you're not there, there is not a day that goes, I mean an hour that goes by, probably, that I'm not thinking about my kids or thinking, “They would love this, or this is what that kid needs, or, right, this clicked, let me talk about it with another person.” You can tell the

> [teachers] that when they're done, they're done. They don't want to talk about it anymore.

Susie recognized that her commitment to caring is something that she shared with her UACM colleagues. “The differences between some of our colleagues and us this year have been stark,” she stated.

> We have a few teachers on my team who are just done with [School name], done with the year, and they didn't really, you know, review for their kids before the exam. Like they're just checked out. They didn't really review. We've been practicing already. We've been doing test review. I saw a teacher making copies of a test review, and it was like a week before. She was just giving them a practice test for the first time, and she's like, “I've just been so awful this year” and laughing about it. I can't even fathom her attitude.
>
> So, you're not going to be here next year, but you should still care about the kids. Our principal even had to say that in the staff meeting, because she overheard a teacher who is leaving say, “Well, I'm not going to be here next year, so this doesn't even apply to me.” And the principal was like, “I didn't know I had to say this, but it does apply to you, even if you don't teach those kids.” I mean it was pathetic. We had to have a talk about how you should still care about the kids that are in your testing group even if they're not in your class. It's just— WHAT? How is that even allowed? It's crazy.

Susie recalled one disturbing situation that she felt illustrated by the lack of understanding and caring that some teachers demonstrated toward students. “I was reminded of the UACM program last week and the importance of names that we focused on a lot during our Maymester course,” she explained.

> We were sitting in the teachers' lounge, and it's rare that I'm in the teachers' lounge, because I usually end up having to spend my lunch in the office for a little bit, so it's not enough time for me to come back down, And I heard this conversation between two third-grade teachers about their kids' names and how there was one called Said [pronounced Seyed] in one of the classes, because they are co-taught. This one teacher was saying, “I just can't believe that. I told him that when he's in my class his name is Said. That's just it. It's spelled Said. Sorry. So I'm not going to call him that. His name is Said.”
>
> And I'm looking at her face, and I got angry. I got super angry. I had already had a pretty hard day, so I was like, “I don't want what has happened and my own frustrations to color the way that I'm responding to her at all. It's maybe not worth

> my time to even address that." But it just made me so upset for the kid. So, I was sitting at the table with them. I was on my own. I wasn't part of the conversation, but certainly I was present. I could have said something. It's usually not my nature to be so confrontational, but it just made me really angry at the time, and just some things that you hear in a hallway of how teachers treat their students. It just – they just don't really treat them with respect.
>
> Names are one of the ways that we identify ourselves, and I think by this teacher ignoring this fact, she was making a choice to not accept this student as an individual, and when she ignored the correct way to pronounce his name, she was making a choice to put down his culture.

While Susie was keenly aware and critical of lack of caring and acts of disrespect that she observed among her colleagues, her resistance was often limited to a critical perspective including strong internal feelings of disapproval for the teachers involved and empathy for the wronged students. She was dissatisfied with her response and struggling to find her voice to intervene. She recalled one example,

> There is a teacher this year. She's new to our school. And my team was rough in the beginning. Rough! I mean we had to have an administrator sit in on all of our meetings for a while, because there were so many fights, and I can't even imagine how much the administration is just really getting frustrated with my team, because I know that there are a lot of complaints and meetings that happened without my knowledge, because they don't apply to me. But there's a teacher that in the hallway on rough days, she'll have a class, and she'll motion that she's over it like this [cutthroat motion] in front of her kids. It's so terrible. No wonder things are going badly. I was really shocked the first time she did it. I was like – "That didn't just happen." And now I'm just trying not to make eye contact with her in the hallway, because I don't want my kids to see that. That's not something I need my children to see.
>
> I thought about talking to an administrator about it, but I don't want to be that person, because I should be able to handle that myself. How do you say something like that to an adult? How do you say something to someone who should know that? You know?
>
> She comes from a really different school environment. She comes from [District name] in a completely different school than we're in. It was a bilingual school. She speaks Spanish as well, which is great. She's an asset on the team, but behavior problems were much more of an element in her job there than they are here. She was breaking up fights and stuff like that, a definite change of culture.

> Not that that would be okay there either, but this is a different environment. It is never is appropriate. It's just really shocking.

While Susie grappled with situations involving direct confrontation with colleagues, she resisted the lack of active caring that she detected around her by trusting in her own judgment, focusing on her own power to positively influence her students, and by going her own way or alone at times.

Susie described two situations when she resisted activities or actions that she felt did not support her students in a caring and respectful way. First she recalled her school honors day.

> We have our own classroom awards day tomorrow, because I hate the school awards day. So at our [school] awards day, there's a form we fill out. You have this many on *Principal's List*, and this is what you can do for your *Principal's List*, *Honor Roll*, *Most Improved* you only get two, blah, blah. And so for every third-grade class that's going up, there is a percentage that is sitting down and the rest are lined up and getting their awards. I noticed that one third-grade class, every kid is in line, and I was like, "Wow, everyone got awards. They must all have *Honor Roll* or something, or *Perfect Attendance*." And then the principal starts reading out *Super Student Awards*, which is not a category. My friend and I are like, "Wait a second. That's not the other side of the paper is it? What is a *Super Student Award*?" And then I'm thinking about it, and I'm like, "That teacher just made it herself and is giving it out." That is great, but that is my biggest problem with my team. It is that there are good ideas, and then there's gossip and not good ideas, but nothing gets communicated well. That would have been great, and it seemed really consistent. Had we done it across the grade level, because all the kids know the awards, so everyone else is sitting there like, "What's a *Super Student Award*? Why didn't I get that? Why didn't my teacher give me that?"

As noted earlier, Susie resisted the possibility of students missing out on the encouragement and affirmation of academic awards by creating her own classroom awards and ceremony. She explained,

> I love our classroom awards. They're just superlatives, and it makes them think when you give them an award, that their peers actually voted for them. So one of the ones I got into special ed this year who has shown a lot of improvement in reading, mainly that he likes to read. He likes to try and read everything to me, like here, "Do you want me to read it out loud?" But he's getting *Most Improved* in reading, and I cannot wait to see how he's just like, everyone voted for me. Yeah.

Another situation in which Susie resisted lack of caring for students occurred during standardized testing when a colleague decided arbitrarily that students could not use the restroom during a testing break. In this instance Susie pushed back and effectively took over the situation. She explained,

> I was in a testing room with one of my good friends last year and I basically ran it – she monitored. We had about 30 something fifth graders, and this year I had 29 fifth graders, but my testing partner was an interesting character. She is very dominating, and really got onto the kids early on. One day she would not let them go to the bathroom during the break, and I was like, "No, I'm going to let them go, because we have ten minutes."

She recalled, "I would have been the kid just sitting there so scared, just sitting there like, 'I really have to go. I just want to get through with this,' and focusing on that." Susie noted that she thought about how to handle the situation and finally decided to let the students go to the restroom despite what her colleague had said. She also recalled feeling uncomfortable that the testing environment might have felt negative and even foreboding for the students. She said, "Already, without me doing anything, I was already the good cop, like the combo, you know. All right, well, fine, because you're allowed to smile at them, because you want them to be comfortable in the testing environment." "It's been frustrating," Susie elaborated. "I couldn't believe that. We took very different approaches." She continued,

> I mean how could you, if you're worried about your own children, like they should be able to go to the bathroom. How are you going to focus if you are thinking, "Okay, well I really need to go!" So like I just started handling everything.

Susie asserted herself and took over the testing responsibilities, describing her thoughts, which were, "So, you just stay over there, and I'll just do it myself. Thank you." Susie was still reflecting on her reaction to the situation and resolving to do things a little differently in future situations.

> When I'm in a situation and a new person, I will be the quiet one first to kind of test it out and be like, "What are you about, and how could I still get to my goal without like, you know, ruffling any feathers?" But I wish that I had said something sooner, because I still let these kids go to the bathroom.

Susie resisted lack of care for students by trusting her own judgment to make determinations about activities that were less than beneficial for her students and about the best ways to encourage her students. She also continued to reflect and improve her own response to colleagues in situation when she observed lack of care for students.

Sustaining. Susie sustained her commitment to advocacy as caring by focusing on the positive impact her actions made on her students, by maintaining realistic expectations, and by relying on the support of her administrators. She explained her understanding of the power and role of a teacher.

> I just feel like as a teacher, especially in elementary school, you have such power to shape the way kids think about themselves. And I don't take that responsibility lightly. I think it colors a lot of how I choose to phrase things to my kids and the activities that I choose to do. I mean, I guess I respect, and I value the way that their personalities are forming, and I'm a huge part of that. And I can either be a negative influence or try not to be an influence – like be ambivalent or something. Or I could work to be a positive influence, and I would like to be that.

Susie described one student's reaction to receiving a classroom award.

> It was surprising how many just walked around with their awards. The boy who won *Most Athletic*, I mean, he carried that around all day. Our special education teacher who has worked with these kids since kindergarten is moving to another school. So she was taking photos with all of them and different groups, and he just held his award the entire time.

While Susie was confident in the power of her advocacy through active caring, she did not expect that her students would recognize her influence specifically once they became adults. Reflecting on her classroom awards day, she explained,

> I don't know that these are things that I'll ever get credit for in their lives. But if you can shape somebody to be the best that they can or realize that they have a hidden talent or change the way that they view themselves in school, that's so

> powerful. And I always want it to be a fun day. I mean half the reason that they're excited is because they get a prize, and they get a little bag.

In addition to her belief in her power to positively impact her students' self-esteem through her classroom community, Susie took note of the impact of her close relationships with her students on their success in the broader school community. She explained,

> I was at recess today with some second-grade teachers, and they had kids sitting out missing recess, and I haven't had that. They were like, 'Oh what's he in trouble for?' and they were talking to each other. 'I love when you ask him what he did wrong. I just love to hear his answers' I guess that kid admits to a lot of other things that he did. And I was thinking, 'Wow! I really haven't had anybody get in trouble recently.' We've had issues with a student using bad language, and he has a point chart. He loses rewards for that, and we have conversations, but I think when you can build a relationship with your kids, you can just handle things so easily. Once you do that, there's no, 'Well, now move your peg, and that's how many minutes less recess for you.' It just becomes so much easier on you.

Building relationships with students through careful attention and active caring not only resulted in their success, but it also supported Susie's realistic expectations for her students. Susie explained,

> I think that sometimes people are really idealistic and have these big ideas. They don't really understand how children work and that it's not just like that (snaps fingers). Sometimes it is a lot of hard days to make a very positive change in a child. I don't expect to see drastic changes, I have seen some really good changes this year, but hopefully I'll see some really good changes in three years if they [students] continue having good teaching. And I think that's how I think about myself as well. I'm definitely not the teacher that I want to be now, and I probably won't be the teacher that I want to be next year, but it's a journey. And so it's the same with kids. If you come in and expect to take every kid in your class that's reading on a kindergarten level and move them up to grade level, you are going to be disappointed in yourself, and you're going to be disappointed in your kids.

Observing her students' successes and judging those successes through realistic expectations gave Susie confidence in her efforts and desire to sustain her advocacy through active caring.

Finally, she also credited a supportive administrative staff that affirmed her work as a caring teacher advocate and encouraged her to continue with that commitment. She explained,

> I feel like my administration is really awesome in the sense that they can see teachers that are passionate about what they do, and they celebrate that, in a sense. I don't really know that they are best at discerning good teachers from okay teachers that hide it well. But they're very supportive of me.

Susie sustained her advocacy of active caring by focusing on her students' successes, maintaining realistic expectations for her students, and drawing on the support of her administrators.

Summary – Theme One: Advocating through actively caring

Susie envisioned active caring as part of her role as an advocate for her students. She enacted her vision by being vigilant in her observations of her students and attending to their physical needs including situations related to health, food, and clothing. She also attended to her students' emotional needs, drawing on empathy to relate to them and building a supportive classroom community to support their self-esteem and confidence. Finally, Susie demonstrated care for her students by protecting their instructional time and making extra efforts to enhance their school experience. Susie resisted situations when she observed lack of care for students by trusting her own judgment even as she continued to reflect and improve upon her own responses, and she sustained her commitment to active caring by focusing on her students' successes, maintaining realistic expectations for her students, and drawing on the support of her administrators.

Theme Two: Advocating by believing that all children have talents and can succeed

"I have to say, I don't think that I ever thought that kids couldn't achieve something. I think that's just a core belief." Susie stated. She elaborated,

> It doesn't look the same for every single one, but I really, really do believe that, so I spend a lot of time – and I'm thinking about in comparison to some other teachers that I've gotten to know. I spend more time thinking about what will help them get to the end and what those steps in between look like, especially for my

> special ed ones, like how can I create a situation in which they're going to be successful so that they can take more risks.

Susie reiterated that her belief in the potential for each student's succeed was central to her personal philosophy of teaching, and the fact that this was a core value was evident in her program application and interview documents. She argued in her interview writing sample that believing that students can be successful is especially important in urban schools. She stated,

> While I would argue that every elementary teacher across the United States should firmly believe that their students can succeed no matter the challenges they face, I feel that this is a more relevant education issue in the urban classroom. Working in an inner-city, possibly at-need school unfortunately means that some of my students will be dealing with issues that I have never faced. While I may not be able to discuss and relate to them with first-hand experience, I can provide a place where they can learn to move on from their disappointments in a safe manner. Too often society loses faith in minority children or in children who come from challenging environments. This all-too-common belief that because of one's background or hardships, one will not succeed is not only unfair, but doing a disservice to our education system and our youth.

In her program interview, Susie stated that "recognizing students' talents" is an effective way of connecting with culturally diverse students, and she also suggested conversely that low teacher expectations negatively impact learning for diverse students. "In learning that they can survive and overcome certain challenges, a child will begin to inherently believe that they can tackle anything which should mirror their teachers' beliefs and attitudes," she wrote in her interview writing sample.

Susie compared feelings of helplessness about current world crises she often experienced with her feelings about her students, saying,

> When I'm riding to work and listening to the radio, and there's so much negative stuff going on, that I find myself just feeling like the world is so hopeless. Everything around me, like Myanmar, all the refugees are drifting into Thailand. It's just such a horrible situation. But it's funny, I don't feel that same negativity towards my kids. Maybe if I read about them somewhere, I would feel like the odds are stacked against them, but I just can't picture bad stuff happening for them. I have an unrealistic positivity about their future in a sense. Does that make

> sense? It sort of clicked, that most of the time I'm like, the world is awful, everything is terrible, and then I'm like, no, it's not, they're going to be great.

Susie's "unrealistic positivity" or unwavering belief about her students' future successes was a form of advocacy in her work as a teacher, and this belief was the foundation of her actions in the lives of her students. "Because I care about you, I'm insinuating that you're worth something, so I necessarily believe in you," explained Susie. "I think that's very true." Susie enacted her vision by adhering to pedagogical practices that supported her students' successes, by placing confidence in her students' abilities as individuals, and by maintaining high expectations for herself as a professional.

Pedagogical practices supporting success. Susie's vision that all students have abilities and can succeed was evident in her commitment to pedagogical practices that supported her students' successes. She explained the importance of her own pedagogical knowledge to her work setting her students up to be successful,

> I want to be that teacher that truly knows her students, really has a whole wealth of knowledge in terms of strategies, and I feel like I'm starting to get there in terms of some behavior management strategies, but it's only my second year.
>
> I have a lot to learn of how to effectively reach those kids because I still go home wondering, "How are they not understanding this?" and "What am I doing that is preventing them from getting it?" or "What can I do to bridge that gap?"

Susie believed that all children have talents and can succeed, and backed up her ideals by adhering to strategies grounded in culturally relevant strategies, child development theories, and responsive classroom management techniques.

***Culturally relevant strategies*.** Susie discussed the way that her vision had developed since she began teaching, deepening to include an individual focus on each student. She wanted to "truly know" each of her students, and her careful attention to each of them supported this commitment. She stated,

> I feel like an effective teacher of diverse students has strategies to teach them, no matter their background, no matter the background knowledge that they come to you with, no matter their prior schooling, whether that's super high, and they are above a lot of other students, which is a challenge that I've had, or a lack of schooling, and they're coming to you in third grade.

Susie's pedagogical understandings included a firm commitment to culturally relevant practices, and some examples of culturally relevant strategies in her classroom included making connections to students' lives and providing high-level thinking activities and authentic experiences.

Making connections. Susie felt that paying attention to students was an important part of her effective teaching, because it gave her important background knowledge that could help her connect with students as well as immediate information about their response to her instruction. She stated,

> When I'm explaining something, I am looking at all of your faces, and if you look a little confused, we're switching gears. But, I also love to use them as examples, or use stuff that they know. We [were] taught that in our classes, but it's just effective teaching, just effective, how to form a relationship with the kid, get to their level. I mean, food, anything, an example that they would understand. And when their eyes light up, great, I can tell we're on a roll. And I think just being totally tuned into them is helpful, which means you need to get to know them, obviously.

Susie used individual book conferences during independent reading time as one method of getting to know her students personally. I observed her book conferencing during my all-day observation. While the class was working on projects or reading silently, Susie called students up one-by-one who had signed up for a conference with her. The book discussions were friendly and personal as Susie and each student discussed the book they had finished reading. After each discussion, the student read aloud some sentences in response to Susie's request, and she asked if the student thought the book "was too easy, too hard, or just right." Then the student left to go to the library to find a new book to read. Susie made notes before calling the next student up, and

other students continued to sign the white board letting her know that they needed to conference with Susie.

Susie demonstrated her knowledge of her students' backgrounds as she connected the curriculum to students' home lives throughout my full-day observation. As students drifted into the classroom, discussing the previous snow days and the unusually cold weather, Susie compared her thermometer reading (17 degrees) with what students had already learned about the freezing point of water and turned the numbers into a just-for-fun equation. She also made connections between a nonfiction text on Mary McLeod Bethune and the personal lives of the students. The discussion bounced between the informational text and real-life connections that included parents working multiple jobs, students getting scholarships to college, and families who attend Sunday Schools at their churches. Susie also supported the lesson with visuals that built connections including maps of the location in Africa where Bethune's family originated as well as of Chicago where she attended college.

Math instruction also included examples of Susie's incorporation of real life connections. The subject of the story problem of the day that students completed on individual white boards was the number of books that Susie and her push-in support teacher had read since the beginning of the year. Also, when reviewing the geometry vocabulary, Susie used the example of a family to link shapes into broad categories and she used the analogy of two friends as a mnemonic device to link the academic vocabulary word, *parallel,* to its definition.

Reflecting on the connections that arose during her instructional conversations, Susie described how her approach had developed,

> At this point in my teaching career I'm starting to feel like things just come naturally to me more so than they have before, so I think the way that I talk to my kids and the things that I stop and talk about in depth are things that I think I consciously had to do up until this semester.

In addition to connections built during instructional conversations, Susie fostered a culturally relevant learning environment by encouraging the use of the students' home language as they worked in cooperative groups, freely code-switching between English and Spanish throughout the day.

Higher-level thinking activities. Another demonstration of Susie's commitment to culturally relevant strategies to support high expectations for her students was through the fostering of higher-level thinking by incorporating high-level vocabulary, intellectual dialogue, and authentic experiences. Susie selected read-aloud texts with rich vocabulary and language features, promoted school wide STEM-focused activities, encouraged her students to express their thinking through intellectual dialogue, and arranged for her students to engage in authentic experiences through field trips.

"I've been wanting to read aloud one of the original *Amelia Bedelia* books, because so many of them get the new *Amelia Bedelia* books from the library," she explained. Susie explained the new series,

> It's like she [Amelia Bedelia] is a kid, but she still does the same things, it's just kid problems instead. But I loved those books, so my books from the library, I specifically got a ton of Amelia Bedelia, because I knew that they would be interested in the old ones that I used to read. I was happy that [child's name], the little professor, knew some, like they 'draw the drapes,' but she actually drew the drapes.

Susie intentionally selected an *Amelia Bedelia* book as a read-aloud during her observation, due to its focus on homophones and idioms. Also, she explained that she had told the students that she used to like *Amelia Bedelia* books when she was their age, and she thought they would like that connection. As Susie read the book during my observation, she stopped several times to act out words such as "frazzled" by waving her hands and acting flustered. She also stopped to

explain the meaning of a “book jacket” and to make a connection to the saying, “You can’t judge a book by its cover!” She demonstrated the phrase “You could hear a pin drop” by dropping a pin for the students to try to hear, and they all listened intently.

Susie read a chapter from book, *The Tale of Despereaux*, during my full-day observation after indoor recess, and explained that the challenging vocabulary contributed to her decision to choose the book. She stated,

> We've been doing an author study of Kate DiCamillo this year. It is very informal. We did one part during ITBS when our reading time was all over the place, and we had kids coming and going. We did a novel study of *Because of Winn-Dixie*, and they loved it. It was the first one we read, and I found this little brochure, really easy, like every chapter you have a little job to do, like vocabulary prediction. It was really simple, and it was great for when kids would be gone for three chapters and come back, and they loved that book. Kate DiCamillo is awesome, and she has such high vocabulary in her books. So, I kind of ordered it leading up to *Despereaux*. It is a difficult book.

“The vocabulary is becoming more natural to me to use it, and then quickly explain it when I don't think that they would understand, and to put it in a way that they do understand.” Susie explained. Her confidence in her ability to scaffold challenging vocabulary supported her efforts to challenge her students.

In addition to exposing her students to high-level vocabulary, Susie committed personal time to efforts aimed at providing her students and others in the school with enriching academic experiences. She explained her work on her school’s Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) committee,

> I'm also on the STEM committee with three other teachers and the principal because we're trying to get STEM-certified, and I think the teachers that are on that committee really are committed to, one, teaching those content areas, but also believing that that it will assist our kids.

Susie conceded that the process was a lengthy one, but she felt that the results would be invaluable for her students, and she specifically pointed out her service on the committee as an example of advocacy occurring outside of her classroom. She explained,

> I just love it. I think it's going to only do good things for our school, and it's also exposing them to things that maybe they don't have exposure to outside, or they do, and they just don't know the academic language for it. My kids are always doing science experiments outside. Maybe they just need that structured environment in here. So I'm really excited about. Becoming STEM-certified is a long process. This is our very first year. We have a science lab this year finally, and we just did our first STEM day on Friday, which is great.

In addition to her work on STEM certification to provide formal opportunities for higher-level thinking activities within the school, Susie fostered independent thinking and intellectual dialogue within her classroom. During instructional conversations Susie encouraged groups to discuss by asking, "Do we agree? Why or why not?," rather than simply asking students if a group's answer was correct or incorrect. "Thank you for the complete sentence!" she exclaimed as students explained their thinking to the class. After students worked out solutions to math problems on individual white boards, Susie took up several boards and displayed them to the class, noting that each student not only found the answer to the math problem, but also illustrated their mathematical thinking. Students in the class discussed what they liked about each of the boards including the strategy that each student used to find the answer. This subtle yet consistent emphasis on high-level thinking within her own classroom emerged from Susie's firm belief in her students' abilities to engage with challenging vocabulary and intellectual thinking and dialogue.

Another example of Susie's commitment to culturally relevant practice and higher-level thinking was her work organizing field trips as a means of providing authentic experiences. She organized a grade-level trip to a local nature center as well as to the family library trip. While the

library field trip was originally Susie's idea and planned for her own students, she emailed the logistical information as well as the bilingual informational documents and permission forms to her grade-level peers, and offered to assist them in planning the trip for their own classes.

Child development and learning. In addition to pedagogical knowledge that included culturally relevant practices, understandings of child development and learning theories were critical to Susie's expectations and instructional decisions that focused on success for each student. She credited her knowledge in this area with her ability to assist each student in meeting his or her potential. She stated,

> I think sometimes people just don't give kids credit, so they create these lowered standards or incredibly high standards, which they're never going to achieve. And I feel like sometimes when you hear teachers talking about their [students'] deficits, [it is] more so that maybe they have really unrealistic expectations, or that they're not facilitating them in the best way.

Susie argued that in order for teachers to have appropriate expectations and to know how best to instruct each student, they needed to have a grasp on child development and learning theories and continue to grow through experience. She actively engaged in and often took the lead in the process, collecting data, writing reports, and attending meetings to ensure that her students were appropriately assessed and served when necessary. This purposeful attention to child development and learning resulted in success stories that Susie felt would allow her students to reach their highest potentials.

Susie shared some examples of her work using the Response to Intervention (RTI) process to support students who had experienced interruptions and gaps in their education and as a result had fallen behind grade level as well as students with behavioral issues that interfered with their learning. "A lot of kids would have just gotten, 'Oh, well, another teacher's problem,' or 'Leave them behind,'" she explained about students whose difficulties necessitated lengthy

and complicated intervention processes. She described one situation requiring multiple interventions,

> One student did not know his letter names, and so we'd been working all year on identifying letter names, and this one strategy was not working. So, because I thought he also had a speech problem, we did a different strategy of him picking out the letters that he knows, and it was great that he actually could do that, because then he could get phonological awareness testing, which he wasn't able to last year when he got tested. He'd been tested before and did not qualify. They couldn't do a full range because he didn't know his letters. So, anyways, he qualified for support finally, which was great.

Not only is the RTI process complicated with some students, but also it can be extremely labor intensive. Susie explained,

> I've had students recently that had moved in from out of district, so their files were a little bit incomplete. They didn't have behavior plans like we thought they should, so it took a lot of disruption to my class, a lot of data collection, and pages upon pages of writing up what had happened, incident reports, and meetings in order for those students to get moved to a better school with a smaller class size with paras for every student.

While the RTI process was an extremely important tool for Susie as she advocated for the services that her students needed in order to be successful, appropriate use of testing accommodations was another tool with which she had developed expertise. Susie described the importance of accommodations for one student and her struggle advocating through the testing accommodation process,

> I had a student in my class who arrived mid-year from a different school, and he was on 30-minute consultative IEP. Based on his behavior, he needed to be in resource, so early on after he had some episodes in my class, we started collecting data. There was confusion between the special ed coordinator for our little district, the special ed case manager, and the testing coordinator for our school. The student did not end up with any accommodations at first, even though he could have received some based on being an ESOL student. I mean his behavior was rough.
>
> So, I thought he was going to be in a small group setting at least based on what I found in his documents, and then the day of testing they were saying, "Oh, no, he's in a whole group." So, I put together like the special behavior chart and

> incentives, and went and talked to his testing teacher, went and talked to the testing coordinator to explain that it was very stressful, and to ask if they could mimic frequent breaks. And I talked to him individually about what to do when you're frustrated.
>
> This was all in vain because he had episodes every single day of testing and had to be removed every single day. The most he completed was 15 questions on science, because he had a very rough time. I got pulled out of my own testing group to work with him and try to convince him to continue testing and to do his best. The administrators were like, "He needs to be in small group." I'm like, "I know that." "Hey, he should have individual testing." "I also know that." I emailed them the week before, like "Oh, wow," when we started doing review, I could immediately tell we were going to have issues.
>
> I felt like I was trying in some ways, and then in other ways like nobody was advocating and nobody really knew what to do. Because he's become quote, unquote become kind of a problem child, like people don't really know what to do.

Susie took the lead in securing support and accommodations for her students, relying on her knowledge of child development and learning theories when support staff and administrators were not immediately responsive to the needs of challenging students.

Classroom management. In addition to culturally relevant strategies and theories of child development and learning, Susie relied on her responsive classroom management skills to set her students up to be as successful as possible. "I had a lot of problems [with classroom management] when I was at [School Name], and I didn't have a great mentor in terms of that," she recalled. She continued,

> I wasn't sure of myself, I didn't have a lot of strategies, so it was not really good in the end. And then it got a lot better, and I had a really good mentor, and I started to think about it more, and I would say it's pretty strong now.

Susie acknowledged that while she was "starting to get there," it was an ongoing process both in terms of improving her own management skills and reinforcing the rules and routines with her students. She explained,

> One thing that has helped me that I tell other people that are struggling with [it], is that they are going to mess up. I think that I was idealistic about my classroom management, that when it went wrong right after, it wasn't, "Let's do it again. Let's do it again until you get it right, because I know you can do it right." It was that I'm doing something wrong, and I just wasn't sure of myself

Susie's confidence and success with her management procedures drew attention from her administrators. She explained,

> I think that class management has been a problem in third grade and other classes, and so teachers have been instructed to come and watch me. I don't think I'm doing anything different. I think that I'm being consistent, and I think that I'm holding them accountable. We definitely have conversations every day about how you are leaders and how you line up and showing people how you control yourself, I know, every day. But also my management within the classroom of how we treat each other.

While Susie felt confident in her use of responsive classroom management procedures, having a class with a large number of special education students had been especially challenging during her second year of teaching, and her grasp of classroom management strategies had become even more vital to her students' ultimate success.

"Teaching a special ed class where we've had some unusual behavior issues has really made me question everything," she stated.

> It's not even just teaching the content now. It's how to schedule my day and their day so that they can access the content, because if I'm doing something wrong, then they're shut down for the day, and then they're going home. So, I feel like I have to think about many more things than I did last year in terms of teaching – talk about teaching the whole child. That whole child looks really, really different this year than it did last year.

One way that Susie adjusted her schedule to accommodate her students' needs and to support their ability to learn and to behave appropriately was to incorporate a "cooling off" period after recess. She recalled,

> I played around with my recess was time a lot this year, because my ESOL schedule was changing so much, and I want to maximize the time that I had assistance. But, we would go outside for ten minutes and then be wild. So, we

> started a cool-off period, and we haven't used that terminology in a while since it's gotten cold, but our cool-off time was to cool off our minds, to calm down and to cool off our bodies in the air conditioning by sitting still. So, we had ten minutes of recess and about 15 minutes of a read aloud just to cool down.

In addition to being aware that her students could benefit from a "cool-off period," Susie was aware that too much sitting was not conducive to her students' successes. When discussing the full-day observation, Susie expressed her concern that the students had to spend more time than usual "on the carpet" receiving direct instruction because she was trying to make up for lost snow days.

> [This] isn't my ideal day, because I can tell some are getting squirrely and especially for some of my boys with behavior charts, focusing is a big problem, or a big challenge for them. So, I feel like sometimes today when I'm asking them to do too much that it's difficult for them.

Susie was aware of the developmental needs and limitations that impacted her students' abilities to learn, and she was responsive with her management practices to support their success.

Susie had observed that classroom management approaches varied, and she reflected on negative hidden messages that poor classroom management conveyed to students.

> It shocked me when I went into the classroom of a respected teacher last year. She's a really good teacher, but I was shocked that there was an entire group of first graders in the back that were just talking and not listening to her lesson. I was like, that's just not okay. And sometimes when I'm observing other teachers, I'm just like, "How do you not realize that kid has his head down?"
>
> I think that it is a lack of high expectations, because if I'm just allowing you to sit and just talk or play at your desk, then I'm sending you the message that it really doesn't matter if you learn, because this isn't going to be important to you.

For Susie, failing to manage student behavior to maximize their learning was in effect lowering expectations for students' abilities to achieve.

Susie's high expectations for her students' behavior included the belief that they needed to be accountable for themselves and to become leaders by their examples, and she felt it was her

responsibility to teach them those skills. She stated, “Making them be a leader and just being accountable. It’s not okay to just, if you don’t have somebody teaching you, ‘Well, you have been taught, sir, so here you go!’ Somebody cares enough to make you do it the right way.” One way that Susie promoted leaders was to highlight instances of success. “We say, ‘Check yourself, are you doing the right thing?’” She described another manner in which she led her students to think about their behavior,

> At the beginning of the year, I make up an errand. I say, ‘Okay I have to go across the hall. I'm looking for leaders, and I'm going to be right back.’ And then I'll wait outside, and I'll just peak in and just stand there and watch to see what they're doing. Then I would be like, “Awesome job!” even if everybody wasn’t behaving perfectly, and then they're like proud– “I love that I can leave you by yourself,” not that I really do that. “So I'm just going to get a coffee, are you guys cool?” [Laughter]

Fostering accountability aligned with Susie’s approach to classroom management as a tool for positively shaping her students’ perceptions of themselves and protecting them from negative management approaches used by other educators. She stated,

> I think people forget that kids really remember stuff, and it sticks with them, and it drives me crazy when I hear some teachers say, “Ugh, my class is just crazy today. They're just insane, they can't do anything today.” And as the inclusion teacher, I'm like, “That's not us.” I'm like, “Good job! We're not the crazy ones!” Even though, of course, some of us are, bona fide, right? They work to prove it. But no, really, why would I say that in front of them?

Skillful responsive classroom management provided Susie’s students with structures and supports so that they could be as successful as possible in building up their own self-esteem and protecting them from negative perceptions. Management procedures that included consistency, purposeful scheduling, and accountability were especially important for Susie’s students who struggled with behavioral issues.

Confidence in students. Susie held high standards for her classroom management in response to her belief that all children have the potential to succeed, and she also demonstrated

her belief by placing a great deal of confidence in her students' abilities to be leaders within their own realms of influence. By trusting them to be leaders and to take ownership of their learning and their choices, she sent them powerful messages about her confidence in their abilities.

Advocating within their families. Within moments of beginning my full-day observation of Susie's class, I observed her encouraging her students to be advocates for themselves within their own families. In light of confusion over school closings during extreme winter weather, Susie explained how to locate school closing information on local television and radio stations. "Be a leader. You are eight; you can tell your family, 'We need to look at Channel 2.' You can do that!" she admonished. She reminded them that they should listen for the name of the school district not the name of the school, since schools are not usually named specifically. "Making sure that they're advocates as children is what I am teaching them," she explained. "So, if you aren't sure if you have school because of the weather, don't just stay home from school! Like, you're eight. You can be your own advocate for your education," she said.

A district-mandated tornado drill occurred during my full-day observation in Susie's classroom, and teachers had been instructed to review the drill procedures. Rather than simply calling the students into the hallway to practice "duck-and-cover," Susie introduced a discussion about tornados prior to the drill announcement. She began by asking the students what they knew about tornados and assured them that there were not usually that many tornados in Georgia. She also explained that since falling trees and broken glass were the biggest dangers during a tornado, they would take cover in the hallway if there were a tornado warning. Susie took her students into the hallway and crouched against the wall, demonstrating the "duck-and-cover" position as her students first watched and then practiced.

Susie recognized the value in giving her students reasons for the serious nature of the drill that they were asked to conduct. She said, “Sometimes in emergencies I'm afraid that I'm going to scare them, but they're eight, they deserve to know” She continued, “I am going to tell you why we had to go out, because in a real emergency you need to know where to be. I can't be telling you when we're going out, look like this.” She believed that her students’ abilities to be leaders within their own families should be fostered, explaining,

> “Maybe your parents don't know, but you can tell them.” Sometimes I just think, when I stop to explain about a tornado drill and things like that, I think by giving them more, I know that I'm taking time out of a lesson to discuss what they should do at home. But, even when they're not at school, it's still my job to teach them what should happen later, so in a sense I guess I'm being an advocate in that way.

Susie believed that her students could be advocates within their own homes even as children and that not only could they handle information that that would equip them to be involved in important decisions, but also, they deserved to know.

Advocating for their learning. In addition to trusting students to be advocates within their own families, Susie trusted them to be able to understand and to communicate about their own learning. Student-led parent conference day was a school wide activity that Susie highlighted as an example of her advocacy for her students and offered as an opportunity for me to observe. “I like that the students get to give their parents a tour,” she explained. “It’s important that they know where their children are spending time.” Susie saw the event as a safe space for both her students and their parents to practice conversations about learning using English as well as their home language, Spanish. She explained,

> The student-led conferences, which is a school-wide thing that we’ve been doing the past two years, is really getting the kids to take ownership of their learning and their accomplishments throughout the year and also enabling them to have those conversations with their parents. Our school-wide goal is to get them to have these conversations outside of school, and to facilitate them happening.

Prior to my observation of the student-led conferences, Susie showed me the handouts that she created for her students and parents to use together as the students guided their parents through the presentation. One form included reading progress data, and the other included math progress data, and the questions were printed in English as well as Spanish. For each subject students had a small checklist to mark as they presented the data to their families. The checklists included computerized assessments, teacher-made tests, and spelling tests. There was also space for students to describe their behavior, an area of which they were most proud, and their goal for the next semester. There was space for parents to write comments and questions as well as to sign.

"It took an entire morning practicing with the kids, with the PowerPoint," explained Susie regarding the preparations for the event. "Let's go over spelling – okay. Now, we turn the page. Okay. Pretend that your parent is here. What would you say to them?' And my parapro was walking around pretending to be a parent, so, that was helpful when we practiced." Susie had practiced each of the stages of the conferences with her students during the school days prior to the event, and it was evident that the students knew what to do and were excited about being in charge. They took their parents on guided tours of the classroom before sitting with their family members at desks to go over their data notebooks. "Look how much ownership he takes in this class!" she exclaimed as one student carefully showed his mom the broom and cleaning supplies in the closet. "He has never even been the sweeper." Susie applauded the student as he finished giving his mom a tour and observed as other families toured and then settled for the presentation.

Susie used a simple PowerPoint presentation to keep the students on track during the conferences and to remind them of the things they had practiced. There were six family clusters working with six students, three of the clusters having both male and female caregivers, and three clusters have only one female adult. Seven younger siblings moved around the room during

three presentations with two preschool-aged siblings running in circles in front of the interactive white board.

Susie spoke louder to be heard over the playing children, guiding and complementing the group and responding to questions. “This is great! I see lots of parents talking about spelling words!” she announced as she moved from group to group to explain terms such as *inferential*. She explained the difficulty of certain skills, and reassured family members and students that they should not worry about areas for improvement. “The score is from earlier in the year,” she explained, now it would probably be higher.” She continued circulating through the groups until the presentation concluded and then stood at the door thanking each family for attending as they exited.

Susie explained the importance of student-led conferences for her students’ successes,

> I think sometimes in elementary school, the students just don’t know how they’re doing. They know if they’re in trouble or not, but they don’t necessarily know if they’re learning. So I think it’s really beneficial to have those very honest conversations, like, “You’ve made great gains, and this is what you’re getting better at, but look at this one skill that you need to work on. And here’s some stuff that you can do on your own, without me, to work on that.”

Susie felt that engaging in the student-led conferences had enabled her to have direct conversations with her students about their progress, and she used the data notebooks as references during the discussions. She stated, “The knowledge of how they’re doing in school is really powerful, and definitely facilitating conversations between home and school and inviting them in ways where the kids take ownership.” Trusting the students with information about their own learning was a demonstration of Susie’s confidence in their abilities to make an impact on their own learning.

> I just take it for granted that I had those conversations at home, and some of them do. Sometimes their parents are not really surprised at what they’re getting,

> because I've had conversations periodically with them about skills, but I think some parents really are surprised. And I think some of the kids really are surprised.
>
> I don't think it does a kid any justice telling them that they're doing great all along or telling them they're doing poorly all along, because that's not really an accurate description of how they're really doing. I think for every kid, it's important to figure out what you're good at, what you take pride in.

Student-led conferences equipped Susie's students to understand their own learning and skills as well as to communicate with their families about their learning. Developing these skills was evidence of Susie's high expectations for her students' abilities to influence their own academic successes.

Self-regulating their own behavior. Fostering a sense of responsibility for personal behavior was another approach that Susie used to demonstrate her confidence in her students' abilities and ultimately her belief in their potential. "I want to give them the chance to make good choices for themselves, so when we're in line, I might say, 'Do you need to make a smarter choice?' This gives them the chance to take ownership of their own actions." She described a typical conversation about choices,

> "You're making a choice now. I'm giving you the option to make a smarter choice. You know whom you want to talk to; you know what you want to talk about. I don't know that. But you do know the rules, so if you talk later in my line, I will remind you, I will get onto you. You may not get a point in the hallway."

Susie used behavior charts as an intervention for students with behavioral challenges, and I observed that she had conversations about the students' charts in the afternoon in order for the students to understand the consequences of their choices and to have the opportunity to adjust. Susie explained that with all of the students with point charts, the conversations take place throughout the day,

> One gets a prize every hour with his behavior chart, so he comes to my desk every hour, and we have a discussion about his point chart, and I have a prize bag back there. The three boys with point charts, they get a prize at the end of the day if they've had so many points, and we talk about it every time.

The regular discussions about behavior and consequences were a powerful component of the intervention. Susie explained,

> What's the point of having points if you don't talk about it? Because then, especially with a few, we've been working on not letting one things ruin your day. Like, if I remind you to keep your hands to yourself because you are poking a friend with a pencil, don't let that, at 7:30 a.m., ruin your day. That is one section that's done, and now we're moving on. So, it's important to have those conversations.

If a student had difficulty that was documented on the chart, Susie had a personal and friendly conversation with the student about ways that he or she might be able to avoid the situation the next time. She noted that although it took time each day to review the charts, "It's pointless if you don't talk about it." Susie also took a proactive approach to preparing her students for dealing effectively with challenging situations. When she knew that an activity or situation was going to be difficult for a student to handle, she would preview strategies that the student could use to maintain self-control, sending the message to the student that she had confidence that he or she could successfully regulate his or her own behavior.

Susie devoted time to proactive approaches to support her students' abilities to control their own behavior, and she took additional time to fostering resiliency when they failed to make the best choices for their behavior. She described one situation,

> The principal's book of the year is *The 7 Habits of Happy Kids*, and we just read the story – "Beginning With the End in Mind." I chose a kid who has been having a really, really hard year who just this last week has really turned it around as an example of the strategy in the story.
>
> His point chart this week was covered with threes (perfect score) and smiley faces. It was amazing. I explained to him, "This is just one [perfect chart]. Next

> week we might have some twos because people make mistakes. And that's fine, but if we can have three point charts all with smiley faces," I was like, "What would you like? What would be your ideal prize?" And he wanted a piñata. "Sure. Absolutely." And I explained, "It doesn't have to be three consecutive ones, because not everybody has three good weeks in a row, but this is one, so, maybe next week we kind of mess up. Maybe we get some ones. That's okay. Then next week maybe we get threes. Great. Now we have two." He was really excited.
>
> My hope is that whatever we're doing in the class, especially in terms of the way that we treat behavior and the goals that we set for the way that we treat others is realistic in adulthood.

Referring back to the story "Beginning with the End in Mind," Susie explained her determination to equip her students and to trust them with their choices. "You are a person. You have agency in the world. You can make the change," Susie reiterated,

> Should you be okay in a not great situation? No. Some people need a little more direction on how to do that and need a little more help in their stepping stones. But this is a conversation I have a lot with my students.

By trusting students with opportunities to discuss and apply strategies for self-regulation, Susie gave each child tools to self-reflect and to take control of his or her own behavior, evidence of her firm belief in their ability to improve and maintain self-control.

Professional expectations. Not only did Susie demonstrate belief in her students' potential for success by adhering to the most effective pedagogical tools for instruction and promoting their agency as individuals, but also she held high expectations for herself as a professional as she collaborated with other educators and dealt positively with state testing policies. This professional approach benefited her students as Susie's efforts maximized appropriate supports for their learning and turned standardized testing, an activity that often interrupts instruction, into an opportunity for her students to participate in challenging and engaging assignments.

Collaboration. Susie acknowledged that working with so many different adults could be a challenge and sometimes a bit frustrating. She said, "When people find out you're a teacher, especially an elementary school teacher, [they ask,] 'How can you do that all day?' I'm like, 'They're not my problem. It's the adults.' The importance of collaboration and the value of interpersonal skills were factors that Susie recalled as being a surprise to her as a new teacher. In one focus group discussion she explained,

> It seems like one thing that we're all sort of talking about is how much you have to work with other adults to do your own vision. When you're doing your Capstone and walking into your classroom, it's like, "I'm just going to rock it, and I don't need to talk to anybody." Like you do, and there are things that get in your way if they're not aligned, so it's not just forming a cool vision that you're really strong about, but navigating all these barriers that get put up.

Working effectively with other educators was a task that Susie took on purposefully, and she felt that it was worth the effort when she knew that her students were receiving appropriate supports that would allow them to be successful academically.

Susie acknowledged that teaching the special education inclusion class required her to accommodate daily interruptions as about half of her students were pulled twice per day to receive support services. Students in Susie's class also received ESOL services, and this added an extra level of planning to arrange her schedule to accommodate all of the specialists and their schedules. Susie felt that not having all of her students in her classroom together each day impacted the feeling of a "really close-knit community" that she had enjoyed her first year of teaching, but she was certain that the support was important for her students' success.

I observed Susie as she collaborated with a special education teacher "on the fly" prior to the student-led conferences. Susie and her colleague were reviewing a student's data notebook, and Susie was asking for suggestions for an instructional strategy to support the student. The teachers commiserated about the way second-grade standards built into a third-grade standard

that was difficult for students to grasp. Susie demonstrated a computer game that she had found that was helpful for teaching the standard, and she offered to share the link with her colleague. In addition, they discussed modifying activities for differentiation and an idea for a behavior intervention all within a space of about ten minutes. It was apparent that Susie had an easy rapport with her colleague and that there was mutual respect for the knowledge that each had regarding the needs of students.

Not all interactions with other educators in the school building were as productive as her work with the inclusion special education teacher. As noted earlier, Susie recounted several instances when she had advocated for accommodations for students who had come to her class from other schools without appropriate supports in place. She stated, "I felt like I was trying in some ways, and then in other ways nobody was advocating and nobody really knew what to do." In these cases, Susie took the lead, meeting and coordinating between administrators and various specialists in her school while also collecting and documenting student information that could support evaluation.

Skills Susie used to collaborate effectively with her colleagues were challenging at times, but she explained that these were the very skills that she was trying to teach her students, knowing that they would be adults and working with other adults later in life. She stated,

> It's not all great in adulthood, and working with some challenging adults is perfect for that, because you don't always love the people that you work with; that's true. And obviously I'm not saying it just with my coworkers now. My old job I didn't love everybody, but I had to work with them. Those are real conversations and real skills that you have to have. You're living it.

Collaborating effectively with colleagues especially benefitted Susie's students, since her students were served by a group of teachers and support specialists, and her acts of advocacy

were undergirded by her high expectations for her students' abilities and her insistence on her students receiving the best and most appropriate supports available.

***Positive approach*.** Susie's professional attitude toward collaboration was accompanied by a positive approach to standardized testing despite the challenges that often accompanied the tasks. The state-mandated test had been revamped and was being administered for the first time during the semester that I was collecting data. After administering the test the first time, Susie found that she actually appreciated the fact that the test pushed students to use evidence from text in their writing. She explained, "I actually kind of like the Milestones test, because it really pushes them to write and really use evidence from text." She continued,

> I feel like in third grade, at least the way that we taught writing last year, it was like, okay, write an opinion piece about a monster. Write a narrative about what you did in the summer. It was teaching the conventions, but it was way more fluff than what they really need to be doing. And they can do this. I was shocked when I started really working on like pulling evidence from the text. Not just my middle or high, but my special ed kids can do it. It's really great. And I know that if I had started early on, like every single day, talking about the same things that I expect. It would have been amazing for them to do that.

In addition to adopting a positive outlook on the merits of the test as a means of improving academic rigor for her students, Susie also intended to add differentiated projects for students to select during standardized testing as a way to deal with the uneven schedules and locations of students during the testing window. This positive approach to what is typically lost instructional time for many teachers and students would provide her students with additional opportunities for learning and engagement, an investment in her students resulting from her belief in their value and potential. Susie worked at making the best of standardized testing, keeping an open mind and reflecting on ways that she could make the experience better for all of her students, accepting that the test would be out of reach for some children. "I know one student just copied the instructions for the test," she said, smiling. "I was like, 'How'd you do, [student name]?' He

goes, ‘So good. I wrote so much!’ And I'm just like, “Awesome!” A positive effort and outlook on standardized testing and as well as collaboration were professional expectations that Susie adopted to support the best possible atmosphere to support the successes that she believed were within reach of her students.

Resisting. Susie’s unwavering belief in her students’ potential for success endured despite challenges inherent to her students’ backgrounds and low expectations with which they are often associated. She refused to give up on challenging students, because of her belief in their potential, and focusing on successes strengthened her resolve. She described one situation,

> One little boy in particular who just needs so much care, and it was just, honestly, kind of a nightmare at the beginning of the year. But it has turned around this week. It was like a different child. I think he is a little bit immature, and he has a lot of difficulty processing emotions and goes from zero to 100 really quickly. I think because of some things that might have happened in his past, he is very, very scared of change.
>
> So, on the second day of school, I was sternly saying something to his neighbor, “Okay, it’s time. Get out a book. We’re starting independent reading.” Not even yelling. Not even mad, but he got so scared and actually backed his chair away from me like I was going to hit him. I’ve never experienced that with a child.
>
> He also had run away from school once or twice in second grade. He attempted about five times over the course of the first month with me, so I have a walkie-talkie that I carry now. But he’s doing so much better. I felt like I spent so much time. I didn’t really get a lot of support from my grade-level counselor, but the grade-below counselor was wonderful who worked with him in second grade. It’s just this whole team of people that are constantly there to care for him and he just needs a lot of love at the moment.
>
> But, you know, immediately I knew he was going to be sitting next to me. And you could tell right away that he needed a lot of attention, that it was going to take him a lot of processing, so he was my little buddy. He’s always next to me. I make sure that he gets a lot of positive attention, and because of that, he’s doing so much better.
>
> We just had a parent conference, and he and myself and the mom were all tearing up. “You’re doing so well.” I was like, “The problem before was that you were not learning, and look at what you’re doing now.” It’s great.

Her students' successes bolstered Susie's confidence and reinforced her high expectations for all of her students.

In addition to drawing encouragement from student successes, Susie drew strength to resist giving up when she succeeded in getting supports her students needed despite the cumbersome and often frustrating RTI process. She described an example of success she experienced at the end of the school year,

> Well one [example of success] was the placement for one of my students with pretty severe emotional behavior disorder. Through a lot of data collection and journaling of incidents that have happened, he is getting a parapro with him all day, literally all throughout the day next year. He's also getting resource for almost every subject, which normally I wouldn't say is the best, but it absolutely is the best for him. It's really too much for him to be in a classroom with everyone. Even to specials, which is when he has a lot of trouble, but I'm happy with that. It'll be good for him. Yeah, that was one, and I'm very happy.

Experiences that resulted either in improvements of her students' performances or in improved situations of academic support reinforced Susie's determination to resist giving up in difficult situations.

In addition to drawing on successes to maintain her resistance to low expectations in difficult circumstances, Susie accepted an outsider role on occasion, acknowledging that other teachers' skills and expectations were different from her own, and taking a nonjudgmental attitude toward them, while not questioning her own beliefs and practices. "I've heard and overheard some people say that they don't have time for that [STEM certification], because they're behind in reading," she admitted in a matter of fact tone. "I mean on the whole our school is a little bit behind, for sure." Despite the knowledge that other teachers were not supportive, Susie maintained her support for the endeavor, committing time to visiting other STEM-certified elementary schools in the district and collaborating with district teachers.

Susie also observed that teachers' pedagogical skills varied, and that she was comparatively advanced in her knowledge and skills despite only being in her second year of teaching fulltime. She described differences that she had observed,

> I would say the program definitely helped. I think I probably have the propensity to pay attention to a lot of things when I am teaching, and I'm sure we all do this because it's one thing you have to do to be effective. I sometimes see teachers lacking this sometimes.

Professional learning opportunities within her school building highlighted differences in pedagogical skills that Susie depended on to support her students' successes. She explained,

> This colleague of mine who is an instructional coach for the school is wonderful. I learned a lot from her, but she was telling me, "You just assume that everyone teaches like you." And that's kind of been a realization. You really do. You just assume that when I see you in the hall and we chat, that you're doing the same things in your classroom that I'm doing in my classroom.
>
> But at the beginning of the year there's been a push for centers and guided reading and guided math, and I was like, "We're not doing this already? We already are in my classroom. Why are we doing this training?" But having a veteran teacher – who actually used to work as an assistant principal needing to learn how to set up centers and to train kids to use centers was kind of eye-opening for me.
>
> Once every two weeks there are these afternoon sessions on how to do guided reading and what exactly that looks like and, unfortunately, I missed most of the first five sessions because of my parent meetings and stuff, IEP meetings, what have you. But when I finally went to one, I was like, "Okay, this is far enough along. We're like into the meat of guided reading. Sure, I can always use more help with that." And I'd think, "Why are we talking about this? Of course we do all this." Again, it was just kind of eye opening.

Susie gained confidence as she experienced the successes of her most challenged students, and as she accepted an outsider's role, realizing that her own pedagogical knowledge and skills were exceptional and valuable for supporting her students' academic success.

Sustaining. Susie credited her preparation program for giving her the skills to sustain her firm belief that all children can succeed. She explained,

> Before enrolling in the UACM program, I had a very shallow understanding of what it would be like to be an elementary school teacher. The UACM program taught me how to be a culturally responsive professional, what it even means to be culturally responsive, how to teach students from a variety of backgrounds, and how to use a number of teaching strategies to reach every student. In other ways, it solidified beliefs that I had always held, but never had to voice, such as all students can achieve greatness; all students are capable of learning, etcetera.

Susie had worked with teachers who were prepared for their work in other preparation programs, and she contrasted their experiences. “They build up people to be changers without giving them the skills,” she said.

> We have somebody at our school who was part of the Teach for America group, which we all understand what that means and what they come with. We've had some really phenomenal teachers at our school from that group, and this is a great venue for them to get into teaching, but it's what they always needed to be doing. One of my good friends is a perfect example, but then there are also plenty of people that try it on and decide, “This is not for me.” I think absolutely if they build up people to be changers without giving them the skills and not making sure that they really want to teach, then, they aren’t going to make it.
>
> There's a special education teacher at our school who you can have one conversation with or watch her interact with a child for more than five minutes and know that teaching is not even what she is meant to be doing, and definitely not what she wants to be doing. Every day is a struggle for her, and so she is leaving, and we're like, “Oh, onto better things? Not education, right? NO? Oh good, good for you. Great.”

Susie felt that she was equipped with the pedagogical knowledge and skills to sustain her beliefs regarding her work as a teacher advocate who held high expectations for her students. She explained that how her beliefs were the force behind her work in conducting student-led conferences,

> I absolutely would [continue student-led conferences]. I think it aligns very much with my beliefs. I think for kids, the knowledge of how they’re doing in school is really powerful, and definitely facilitating conversations between home and school and including them in ways where the kids take ownership. Because I don’t like it when their parents are coming in all the time when the child’s not present, so they’re not hearing what we’re discussing about them, or it’s only for very specific things like behavior or stuff like that. So I love it. I would definitely

carry it with me.

Susie felt confident in her own abilities, and this confidence sustained her work even when she felt unsupported and even discouraged by indifference from her grade-level team.

Susie sustained her efforts at providing experiences that supported her students' success by going alone on occasion. She explained,

> My team was very negative this year. It was like working by myself, which is a valuable skill, because I was really terrified about that, but it was nice to know I can do it alone. It's not ideal, but that's good to know.
>
> I think that was a good lesson for me to learn, because I am a person who likes to seek approval, and I kind of just have given up on that, because I realized that some people are just never going to give you approval, and they're not in it for the same reasons that I'm in it, and understanding that means that I can continue on doing stuff.

"It's super frustrating and very disappointing," explained Susie that none of her peers had planned the trip for their own students' parents to the local library after she had provided all of the information and materials. She realized that she could not rely on her colleagues to support her efforts, and she reflected that in addition to a lower level of caring, the teachers inaction was partially "a lack of education." As if indifference was not frustrating enough, Susie's grade-level team also responded initially to the nature center field trip with "backlash." Susie explained how she coped,

> I'm planning a field trip the Friday that I'm going to be gone, so I'm trying to get it all done and taken care of. This is the first time I've done it, but I'm not going to be there which, yeah, is really sad, because it's going to be an awesome field trip, and my kids are really sad. But it'll be fun for everyone else. And at first there was a lot of backlash, like, "Why are we planning a field trip?" And then they started going like, "Oh, thank you. Thanks for doing that." But normally they just stay away. Like I'll see them talking in the hall and like, you know, they're on my team. They should be friendly. I'm like, "I just know whatever you're talking about is not going to be positive, so I'm going to just keep walking." Sometimes it's kind of awkward. Sometimes I don't care anymore.

Susie adopted a “don’t care” attitude to cope with indifferent and negative colleagues, but when she was asked to serve as grade-level chair beginning in her third year of teaching, she spoke of her intention to promote collaboration,

> I think next year will be a little better being grade chair. I think I'm in a position with a team I can sort of cultivate or at least try to cultivate a group dynamic. I feel like that was just given up really this past year. So there's no group dynamic except for some negativity at some random times. We never met, so I'm hoping that will just sort of change. If nothing else, if it doesn't work, which it may not, there are always still going to be issues, I will learn something else, and we'll all learn to work with adults.

Approaching the challenge of collaboration with positive leadership was a strategy that Susie would apply in her third year of teaching, but she expressed confidence in her ability to go her own way if necessary.

Susie’s plan to be a grade-level chair that fostered positive leadership reflected the generally positive interactions she had with her building administrators, and this support was also significant in her ability to sustain her advocacy in believing that all children can succeed. “I think especially with some of the frustrations that I've had with trying to get services where I haven't, at least the administrators that I'm in direct contact with are very understanding that it's frustrating and very supportive,” she explained.

Standardized testing was also a major concern for Susie, since third grade was a gateway year for students, meaning that they were required to pass certain subject area tests in order to move on to the next grade level. “I've been super-stressed and anxious about this test,” she admitted, “and like wondering if my kids are ready, because it's so different and just with different challenges that I've had.” Susie drew laughter during a focus group as she continued,

> My principal has a good perspective. She’s like, “It's new and the scores are not going to be great.” You don't find them out until November. She was like, “But I am competitive. I just want to be better than somebody else.”

> But, yeah, I worry about some of the preparations. Like I know I haven't done what I consider my best, and so I'm excited for next year because I think gearing up towards the test and seeing how long it is has really given me a lot of ideas, like how to start Day One, and work towards that.

Support from her administrators sustained Susie in her efforts, and she recognized positive signs from her grade-level colleagues. "My grade level doesn't really get together ever, and so I think they come for you when they need something, and they've been really appreciative recently," she commented. "They've been actually saying thank you for stuff, which is nice." Positive responses from colleagues and administrators, confidence in her own self-sufficiency, and beliefs firmly grounded in pedagogical knowledge and skills sustained Susie as a teacher advocate who believed that each of her students could succeed.

Summary – Theme Two: Advocating by believing that all children have talents and can succeed

The belief that all children have talents and can succeed was at the core of Susie's vision for her work as an advocate for her students. She proved her commitment to the belief though the use of pedagogical knowledge that included culturally relevant practices, appropriate expectations based on child and learning development theories, and through structures of responsive classroom management. Susie also trusted her students to be leaders and advocates at home and to take ownership of their learning and their choices, a powerful message about her confidence in their abilities. Finally, Susie demonstrated a commitment to professionalism as she collaborated with other educators and maintained a positive approach to standardized testing to provide the best possible supports and academic environment possible for her students.

"I think that core belief that they will succeed is so, so important. If you don't believe that, you're not going to put in the time to make sure that they can succeed," argued Susie. She

also expressed her belief that her preparation for teaching within the UACM program gave her the means to enact her vision that all children can succeed. She stated,

> It just sort of solidified the way that I always felt, and just furthered my beliefs, and also taught me to talk about those things and give me a way to express myself in that sort of way. And I think also it kind of expanded my understanding of how to be a teacher that was an advocate for her kids. Coming into the program I would have thought, 'Okay, a really powerful teacher does stuff with her parents.' I think I had a very superficial idea of what it meant to be a really good teacher, and definitely through some examples that we had seen or discussing ways of how, not everything you're presenting kids with in the textbook is correct and how you need to break barriers in that sort of way. It just gave me a lot of ideas of how to do that, how to be more effective.

Susie experienced frustration when she realized that not all teachers held the same high expectations for their students to reach their potential, and she accepted that not every teacher would appreciate her beliefs or even agree with them. Susie resisted what she called "negativity" by avoiding people and situations that felt negative to her, focusing on the successes of her efforts for her students, focusing on her students' academic successes, and relying on support from her school administrators and a hope for positive change in her school environment.

Theme Three: Advocating by teaching beyond boundaries

Active caring, emerging from Susie's core belief in every student's ability to succeed, was the foundation of her approach to teaching and learning as a limitless endeavor. In her application goals statement, Susie wrote,

> While I will be meeting my students at the start of their educational journey, I hope to instill in them a feeling of empowerment and accountability that they can transfer to other parts of their life. I want my students to not only ask questions and grow within the classroom, but I hope that they become self-motivated adults who truly engage with their surrounding communities and world.

Susie recognized before she entered her teacher preparation program the power she would have over students, and this realization had not lost its significance for her over time. "It kind of freaks me out that I have that much power," she admitted. Susie agreed with one colleague's statement

that, “a teacher is not just a teacher.” Her perspective inspired her to teach beyond boundaries of time and space giving Susie opportunities to advocate for her students into their future lives, an anticipatory advocacy that she enacted through modeling and fostering a lifelong commitment to learning, teaching for life, and teaching to bridge gaps.

Lifelong learning. “I love learning, and my simple goal is to inspire children to love learning as much as I do. This is so important in our urban schools where students may not have a support system that understands the value of education,” wrote Susie in her application goals statement. After two years in the classroom, Susie’s love of learning remained strong. She recalled a conversation with a veteran colleague,

> One teacher who has been teaching for 17 years in fourth grade, who I'd never really spoken to before, she was saying, “You just seem seasoned. You seem like you have been teaching for longer.” And I was like, “Thank you.” And we were both just saying the best thing about teaching is that you just get to learn all the time, and I fully believe that it's important to be a lifelong learner, and I hope that's something that I'm showing my kids. It was really helpful saying, “Ms. _____ has homework, too.” Being in grad school was good for actually modeling that, but yeah, I never want to be complacent.

Susie argued, “I think a great teacher is one who realizes that there‘s always more to learn.” She demonstrated that attitude by committing to and modeling her own lifelong learning and by expecting and embracing change.

During my full-day observation I noted that Susie modeled the natural progression from curiosity to learning through the avenue of research. “I am curious about what we will learn from this new book about Mary McLeod Bethune,” she told her students. They had read a book on the subject previously, and Susie hinted that this text might contain additional information. In fact, the students were interested in the school that Bethune built in Florida, and they generated numerous questions. “We will have to do some additional research,” said Susie, “to answer all of your questions.” Learning from research was a routine activity for Susie and her students.

Susie demonstrated her determination not to become complacent as a learner, and she admitted that her participation in the UACM program had strengthened her commitment to staying open to change. She stated,

> I feel like this program really differentiates itself and that we're expecting to go on a journey from the very first start, and I think this goes back to how there are ground rules. The expectation is that you will change, and you might have these really strong beliefs at one point, and some of them don't have to change. Maybe they should just strengthen, but that you need to throw yourself into this, because that's how you should be as a teacher, throwing yourself into your career. And I think that was really modeled very well by a lot of our professors, and by other people that we worked with.

Susie recognized that she had more to learn, and she expected to continue to grow. "I think the second that I got in the program and heard that phrase, 'change agent,' it was like, 'That's what I want to be!' I don't think I'm there at all," she admitted. Susie described how the reality of the classroom had given her a deeper perspective. She explained,

> I think when you really get to know your work, and you see how much work there is to be done, it's never ending. So, I mean I'm sure we're all thinking about how can I make next year better? I do this. I could expand upon this, and I'm sure every year I'm going to be feeling that way, so I feel like it's a journey. Hopefully, I'm positively changing stuff along the way.

Modeling and promoting an attitude of lifelong learning was one way that Susie advocated for her students beyond boundaries and extended her influence into their adult lives.

Teaching for life. In addition treating learning as a lifelong endeavor, Susie freed her teaching from the bondage of curriculum standards and skills for the classroom; rather she expressed a commitment to teaching the "whole child," including an expectation that her work would impact the futures of her students. She explained,

> I really wholeheartedly believe in teaching the whole child, and I think in a certain sense that I do have to teach them reading, obviously, and math, and those things are great, and you can have so much fun, and there's so much to learn from that, but I feel like in order to be a really effective teacher, I have to also be able to teach them life skills outside, whether that's organization for some of them,

> planning, little strategies that they can use beyond me, because I don't know where they're going after this.

Susie found opportunities to teach life skills through conversations around various classroom events and activities. She described how generating ground rules for the classroom community began a yearlong focus on leadership. She recalled,

> We talk a lot about that in the beginning of the year when we make our classroom contract, when we brainstorm our rules, and it's like a whole day's activity to come up with them. They actually didn't come up with, "Be a leader," but we talked about how being a leader would be to follow all of the rules.

Conversations about life skills were a routine in Susie's classroom, and she recalled how her own upbringing influenced her efforts to prepare her students for life,

> I had a really strong mother figure that is great, and I look up to her in a lot of ways. And not everybody has that, but that was the person who I would think, okay does she tell me how to do this? Does she tell me how to stand up for myself? And those are skills that I'm realizing in my later 20s, really, how much I need to be like her. And so that sculpted the way that I view myself and view the decisions that I've made and help me have conversations with my kids about stuff like that.

During my observations I noted that Susie taught her students to communicate and advocate for themselves regarding their clothing, their school attendance, and their academic performance. She explained that "a well-run classroom where people are respectful, and you're building their sense of community, and you're teaching them how they work with a group in an effective way gives students an experience that can benefit them for the rest of their lives."

Susie even attended to life and interpersonal skills during her end-of-year classroom awards event, encouraging students to value positive teamwork and hard work as much as academic achievement. Susie described her goals for the winners of the sports-related awards,

> There are some sports ones, but we talk about what you have to do to be going to the Olympics or to be the most athletic. You have to be determined, hardworking. You can't be stealing the ball. So you have to be a team player.

Even the distribution of the awards became an opportunity for Susie to teach life skills. She described how she discouraged students from whispering and pointing when she was describing an award. She explained,

> We stop immediately and talk about how we don't like that because if you're that kid, and you don't get that award, then your feelings are going to be hurt. But they shouldn't be hurt, because you're getting an award anyways. But you're setting someone up to feel kind of bad,' so we nix that.

Susie felt that teaching life skills was especially important for her English-learner (EL) students. She stated,

> I feel like they are so bright – The way that I view EL learners is you just have to give them the resources to be successful. They're very smart kids. They have things working against them, but you just need to clue them in with the way other people think sometimes. [It's] like there's a secret club that some people get to belong to, and that other people don't, and unfortunately they're born into a world where they're not born into this secret club, but they should be a part of that, and they deserve to be a part of that.

Susie made an effort to teach her EL students sayings such as "Great minds think alike," because she thought this could be a phrase that her students would hear on a job interview in the future. She also taught them how to shake hands, explaining what was proper and what was not.

> I try, like, whenever I'm using common sayings, I do this a lot when I say like, "Great minds think alike." I've explained this before, but one didn't know what it was, so I'm like, "Well, let's stop and explain this, because it's important, because this is something that somebody could say in a job interview, and you need to know, like, *[laughs]* you need to know to laugh at it and not take offense at it."
>
> Like, when we do our handshakes in the morning, we talk about what a proper handshake looks like. Like, "You don't do it with your sweater over your hand; you don't go like this [hand hanging down]. You're not going to get a job like that. And you may not be able to practice your handshake until you go for your first job, so learn what it looks like."

Teaching her students to shake hands appropriately for the purpose of presenting themselves well on job interviews in the future was an example of Susie teaching life skills as a form of anticipatory advocacy.

Teaching to bridge gaps. In addition to expanding her teaching to include lifelong learning and teaching for life, Susie regarded her work as a means of bridging by crossing boundaries between home and school as well as between the present and the future, from one grade level to the next as well as into the adult futures of her students.

Home and school. "Meet with parents. Reach out a lot, and stress the importance of their influence on their child's achievement, focusing on the positive, rather than the negative," said Susie responding to a program interview question centered on encouraging family engagement. She also named some obstacles that may prevent family engagement. "Parents may not understand the problems being faced," she stated, "and they may not be equipped to participate." Susie had a sense of the challenges involved in engaging families of diverse students in the school setting even before she entered her preparation program.

"I guess I feel like I'm bridging the gap between parents and school a little bit better this year," stated Susie. She continued,

> But I feel like I've gotten to better know their families this year. Really last year, my first year teaching, the only way that I really got to know their families was when we had parent conferences or when I had a scheduled conference with someone.

She described one way she was working to bridge the gap between the classroom and her students' homes,

> I think an effective teacher has a wealth of knowledge but, too, has the time and the resources, I guess, to really get to know their students and their families. I've done better with that this year than I did last year, which is good, but I work in a population where every single parent in my classroom speaks Spanish, so one of my goals is to learn Spanish. I may not be at my school forever, but this is definitely the population that I'd like to continue to work in.

In addition to setting a goal to learn Spanish to facilitate her interactions with her students' families, Susie made progress on developing a bilingual class website. "I went to a website

training," she explained. "That was pretty cool, because that was another goal of mine this year, to create a website that's dual language, and it's not where I want it, but it's a start." She described her website,

> So the website that I had planned has a section for parent resources and student resources, and there are only a few tabs per each, since it's all the kids can really handle, like a link to BrainPOP. I wanted to put up some pictures or basics about what are we learning, so they can have those conversations with their families, and the district platform that you have to use to create the website through has a translation feature, which is really handy.

Susie recalled how her work on the website led to an awareness of a need and then a successful family engagement event.

> When I talked to my kids at the beginning of the year, I found out that no one had a computer at home, and so that bothered me in one sense. I mean not that that was new information, but it really bothered me to find out that they did not know that the local public library, which is a mile from the school, has free library books and computers to use. So, I started telling them about it, because I bring in a lot of my own library books. I'm all about my library. There's usually always a huge bag of books sitting here from my own local library full of high interest, various levels, non-fiction, fiction books that we don't have here, just to get them excited.
>
> I coordinated with the school interpreter and we planned an event to the library just for my class. A form in English and in Spanish went home. It was just basically my goal to link up the librarian, who had been trying to do some outreach but didn't really know what that would look like, and the parents. I got half my class signed up for a library card, which was great. So I think I want to do that after testing, to go back and be like, "Okay, you have your library card. Let's get on the computer," and show them what that look like. And so the website to me went hand-in-hand with the library field trip, because if they're going to the library to get on to the computer for free, they can find resources that are helpful to them on the class website.
>
> I just got an email from the librarian last week saying, "We still see your families coming in, and we just really loved it. My librarians and I still talk about what a great event it was." They were like, "How could we support you in any way?"

Traveling to the local library with her students and their families was one way that Susie advocated for her students beyond the bounds of the school, and she delighted in the fact that the

event bridged home and school. “I loved that library thing, because it gave me a chance to be like, ‘Oh, yeah. I know you and your little brother and sister. I know kind of where you live. Specifically, that was when I really got to know their siblings.” The familiarity that Susie developed as she got to know her students’ families though the library field trip was helpful when families came to the school for other events such as open-house and student-led conferences. Susie described the open house,

> We had an event that was school-wide where each grade level spends an hour and every kid can invite a guest into their classroom. So you kind of do a mini-day for your guests. We did our mini morning meeting, and this was all student-led. We trained them. They gave a tour of the classroom. They talked about the classroom contract, and then we did a little bit of a math lesson and made a make-and-take activity to take home and then one for reading. The kids had to bring someone that was an adult over 18, and they could only bring one, no brothers or sisters, even though there were some babies that snuck in, but that was fine.

While the open house bridged home and school by giving families the opportunity to see what their children’s day was like, the student-led conference day bridged the academic gap between home and family. Susie was committed to the event and viewed it as advocacy to break down barriers to family engagement in academics. She explained,

> I think parents are really interested in how their kids are doing, obviously, and they care about their learning. But sometimes it’s difficult for the kids to find the words to talk about it. How do you explain what I’m doing well at and what I’m not? Because if you don’t share all that with your students, how are they going to know? And I think sometimes the parents don’t have – can’t think of what questions to ask.
>
> We don’t have enough interpreters, and we can pay for them for certain things, but we can’t pay for them for everything, and my principal was like, ‘I want the students to act as the interpreters.’ Luckily, I know enough Spanish that I can listen and be like, “That’s not quite what I said. Please rephrase that.”
>
> But I think it’s great. It’s also pushing them to use Spanish in an academic setting, which they’re not often having to do. So some of the words can get a little tricky. But yeah, I mean, the kids have figured out ways to illustrate, “This is the kind of problem that we have to do.” I was actually quite happy that we didn’t have interpreters. And that’s why practicing was important. I really had to drill in,

> "This is student led. It's not okay for your mom to show up by herself because Miss _____'s not talking to her. It's your job to talk to her." So there were some parents there that I'd never seen, and that was great.

Drawing more family members into the classroom and providing information about their students' academic performance gave Susie opportunities to teach beyond boundaries, and her work organizing the library event off campus enriched the on campus events.

Between present and future. Susie envisioned her advocacy work as a powerful influence that bridged gaps between her students' homes and their school, but she also felt that her work could be a powerful influence spanning into her students' futures. She stated,

> When I stop to explain about a tornado drill and things like that, I know that I'm taking time out of a lesson to discuss what you should do at home. But, even though they're not at school, it's still my job to teach them what should happen later.

Susie taught with an awareness of the needs of her students in the near future, and she also felt a responsibility to advocate for students' distant futures.

Susie's students were accustomed to thinking and talking about their futures as college students and as grown-ups with careers. While reading aloud a text about Mary McLeod Bethune, Susie commented, "Mary McLeod Bethune received a scholarship to attend Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, Illinois. Remember, we talked about how you can get a scholarship when you go to college?" It was clear that Susie had discussed the topic of college attendance with her class, because they referred to those conversations and used appropriate vocabulary to describe features of college life that they might not have experienced personally. One group of girls announced that they planned to room together in the dorm, and they asked Susie if six girls could be in one room. During inside recess, Susie allowed the girls to look at the Georgia State University housing website to look up the number of students assigned to dorm suites.

While college attendance was discussed and assumed in Susie's classroom, discussions about future careers were also routine occurrences. "You're kind of culturing what they think they could do in the future," Susie also explained, referring to the ways she used student conferences to link students' schoolwork with their futures.

> Even if they're not super good at something, you could phrase it in a way like, "You've mentioned you want to be an astronaut. Well, astronauts really need to know their math. I see that you're a little bit low in this area, so this is something that we need to work on." Another conversation might begin, "Wow! Have you ever thought about doing something with writing? Your writing is great."
>
> Those are conversations that we've had, about what you want to be, and how you're doing in school, and how that's going to get you there. But also, if you're a little bit low in geometry, "I know that's coming in fourth grade, so this is something that doesn't just stop in third. You're going to have a data notebook like this in fourth grade."
>
> So, I think you can help them think about their futures through some of these little conferences. It is like you're connecting their present with their future, even on to fourth grade – immediate future and distant future.

In addition to connecting students' academic progress to their future careers, Susie also used her classroom awards day to make connections between her students' talents and possibilities for their futures.

> I love classroom awards. We have like *Future Doctor*, and we talk about our awards a lot before, especially while the school-wide awards are going on. "Don't worry, if you're sitting there without one or if you're going up and you wish you had something else, we're going to get our own, and we have treat bags and you get to pick a prize. It's a thing." But yeah, you could become a lawyer. What's a lawyer? It starts the conversations, at least for me. I don't know that they care. I think they really care about the prizes, but I like to manipulate it. One kid voted me for *Future Teacher*. Let's talk about that word, 'future.' *[Laughter]* But anyways that's tomorrow.

Susie described the future-oriented perspective that she models for her students,

> "There's no option of what you cannot do. There's literally no limit. Do you want to do this? We can come up with 1,000 options of how we can do that." Career day was interesting, because we were like, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" "I want to babysit." "I want to work at a

> pizza store." I'm like, "Wow, that sounds great, but those are jobs; we're talking about careers. Instead of being a babysitter, you could own a babysitting empire." And so one of student in my class, when they wrote a little essay of what they want to do, he wrote, "I want to run a babysitting empire."

By making connections between elementary school, college, and future careers, Susie advocated for her students' futures. Teaching to bridge gaps, to instill life skills, and to inspire lifelong learning were examples of Susie's work teaching beyond the boundaries of her classroom and school.

Resisting. Susie detected ambivalence on the part of colleagues in response to her efforts to push the boundaries of her influence beyond the limits of her classroom, and she admitted that it was "super frustrating and very disappointing." She described her grade-level peers response to the library field trip,

> When I first talked to my principal about the library field trip, I asked her, "Do I try and plan it for my grade level or do I just do my thing?" And she was like, "Worry about you, and then when you're done with you, because this is your first time doing it, then tell your grade level, 'This is what I did and here you go, and it was really successful,'" and I was like, "Okay, I'll stick with that."
>
> And then I told my team, "I'm going to do this. I'll provide you with the materials. The librarian's super excited. I'll tell you how it goes." One person got back to me and said, "Great. We can't wait to hear." And then after it was done, I sent a follow-up email. Also, I don't know if anybody checks their email, which drives me crazy sometimes. So, I told the rest of my team about it immediately, that I was doing it, and forwarded them all the materials. Unfortunately, nobody else has done it yet. Sadly, I'm not surprised, maybe someday.

Susie had little patience for the complacency she observed among her grade-level peers. She admitted that in some ways she had been "a loner" that school year because of her unwillingness to engage in what she interpreted as negativity. Susie avoided interactions with negative colleagues who could weather her vision for teaching by telling herself to "just keep walking" when she passed them in the hallway.

Susie argued that teachers who had "checked out" should seek a different career. In a conversation with a colleague about that colleague's choice to leave a negative situation at one school to work in a different school environment, Susie stated,

> It's good that you're receptive to that [dissatisfaction], because I feel like some people are not at all receptive, and that's why there are teachers that feel so negatively and have checked out. If you really feel this way consistently, that is a sign that you need to move on to better things for you.

Susie resisted discouragement by avoiding negative peers and suggesting that those with negative perspectives should be the ones to change, removing themselves from teaching situations if they were dissatisfied.

Sustaining. Susie committed significant amounts of time and energy to teaching beyond the bounds of her classroom, and the results of her efforts sustained her.

> My mom always says, "I just can't wait! I know your kids are going to come back to thank you when they're grown up." I'm like, "I don't care if they do. I mean they're young. They may not remember, but I don't even care, because I want them to have these values instilled within them. That's my goal. It's not like, 'Hey, remember that great party you threw? Thank you.'"

While Susie did not expect her advocacy to necessarily have immediate or dramatic results, she drew encouragement from small victories. She described the outcome of the library field trip,

> It was great. They hadn't been there, but either they really wanted to go, or they didn't know that the computers were free. Before we signed everybody up for a library card, we just sat down and went through the school website with them, showing them that we offer English language classes and the things that the library will do. A lot of them didn't even know that it was there, which is great. It's walking distance from their homes.

In addition to positive results from the library field trip, Susie was encouraged when she knew that her students were benefiting from her advocacy. "I will say that student-led conferences have enabled me to have more direct conversations with some kids about their progress," she stated. She continued,

> One student gets a little frustrated with multiplication. In fact, she wrote me a note that she hates multiplication. I like that we can refer back to her data notebook and be like, "This is what we talked about with your parents. Remember? Look at the beginning of subtraction. You hated it. You just didn't do your work, and then you jumped. We're going to have the same thing."

In addition to drawing on student success, Susie noted that her relationship with the administration of her school was generally positive, and that relationship helped her to resist negativity and sustain her vision for her work. Finally, Susie agreed with other study participants that remembering teachers from her UACM cohort who maintained their visions for their work was "inspiring." She said,

> I think it's easy to forget sometimes [the existence of like-minded people]. I felt like kind of a loner this year, but this is even, very inspiring. We have all summer off guys; it's a shame. [Laughter] We should be getting back to work right now.

Student success, a supportive administrative team, and knowledge of the existence of like-minded teachers even outside of the school sustained Susie's vision for teaching beyond boundaries.

Summary – Theme Three: Advocating by Teaching beyond Boundaries

"I want to be a positive influence," stated Susie, recognizing the power she had to influence the futures of her young students. She explained,

> Some of them move. Some of them are going to fourth grade with other great teachers or maybe teachers that are just really different, so I think teaching them skills that they can use outside of here is really helpful and also trying to just bridge that gap between what's happening in school and then what's happening in the home. I mean that's not going to happen in one year. That's not even going to happen in two years. But, I'm going to keep working on it.

The realization that her work could make a difference beyond the boundary of the classroom inspired Susie to teach without placing limits on her role as a teacher. Susie seized opportunities to advocate for her students into their future lives, an anticipatory advocacy that she enacted

through modeling and fostering a lifelong commitment to learning, teaching life skills, and teaching to bridge gaps between home and school as well as the present and the future.

Conclusion

My study of Susie's work as a teacher advocate was rich with examples of the ways she enacted her vision for herself as a teacher advocate. She actively cared for her students, holding firmly to her belief that every child can succeed, and pushing beyond boundaries in powerful ways to advocate for their futures. Reflecting with her UACM colleagues, Susie explained her belief regarding the importance of purpose and preparation in making the decision to become a teacher. She argued,

> I've talked a bit before about those teacher preparation programs that don't prepare you at all, and I think they build up this ideal of, "You are going to have a great experience. You are going to have a great experience teaching for a few years, and your résumé is going to look awesome, and your life is going to change." Instead of the idea of, "I'm dedicating my life to change others. And, yeah, I'll change in the process, of course, but I am changing other people's lives, and that's my goal."
>
> I think probably a lot of us got into [teaching] for, I hate to say the right reasons, because you never know why other people get into it, but maybe teachers that are having a harder time or don't care as much as us are in it for different reasons.

Purpose for teaching was foundational to Susie's vision for herself as a teacher and to the ways in which she enacted advocacy for her students. She continued,

> I think when you come into teaching, because maybe things have happened in your life, or you're realizing that other things aren't doing it for you. They're not fulfilling, and it's not really your true calling in life, and you come to teaching from that, then I think these things [acts of advocacy] are just going to be natural.

Susie described her vision and actions as a teacher as purpose-driven, making acts of advocacy that exceeded the traditional role of the teacher only natural. Furthermore, she attributed the strong sense of purpose she shared with her colleagues to unshakable core beliefs. She explained,

> I can't speak for everybody, but it seems like the other participants, knowing them through the program, we're also the sorts of people that don't lose that core belief with everything else going on, and I think that's something that probably happens a lot in teaching.

Susie observed the toll that "everything else going on" was taking on her grade-level team. She explained,

> I am going to be grade chair next year. Same grade level. I'm the only one staying out of six teachers. A few are actually feeling the pressure of testing. One is going down to second grade. She just can't take it. She's been in third grade, like, 20 years, and she said, "It's just getting worse. I can't do it." It is a high-pressure year.

Even as Susie contemplated taking on additional leadership within her school, she reflected on the challenges of her second year of teaching,

> In certain ways I'm doing a lot of things better this year, but I feel like just based on my class makeup last year I was able to do a little bit more, more with the requirements of being in grad school that we had to do, but unfortunately because of other issues happening that I've had to make some calls. And we've done other things this year that we didn't do last year, but it just kind of makes me remember, like, "Oh, yeah, note to myself. That's what I'd like to be again."

Susie infused her work with her students, with other participants in the study, and with me with a good-natured sense of humor and openness that built rapport and added joy and optimism. Although these characteristics did not emerge as themes within the data, I was aware through interactions with and observations of Susie that her positive approach to her students was consistent with her approach to life. "You have the power that you're either going to give up and just accept what's happening to you," she stated, "or you have the power to change it." Susie dedicated her work as a teacher advocate to making positive changes in the lives of her students as she actively cared for them, firmly held to her belief that each child had the potential for success, and insistently taught beyond traditional boundaries.

Michelle

My dad was an alcoholic and very abusive, verbally and physically. And so, our entire lives as kids we heard that we were never good enough for anything. Because I was really smart, and I did really well, my teachers absolutely loved me. My brother, I think the things that happened to us a home really greatly affected him. He was the baby, so it affected him to the point where he, even though he is very smart, and he knows a lot about things, he just didn't— It's like when you hear that you are nothing, you live up to those expectations sometimes.

My personality is such that I thought my dad was full of crap, and my goal was to prove to him— like I would never ever have let myself fall into what he told me, because I knew it wasn't true, but my brother kind of went into the opposite direction. I really feel that because I was able to go to school and have teachers who fostered my sense of self even though they didn't know what was going on at home-- "You are a good person. You are very smart." I feel like I was kind of able to see the light at the end of the tunnel, and I knew that things didn't have to be the way they were at home.

Of course, my brother didn't have that. He had people at home telling him he was worthless, and people at school saying basically the same thing.

Education and Background

"I've been this way since I was a kid," reflected Michelle, a Caucasian woman in her late twenties. "I'm an oldest child. I always had to take care of myself. My parents worked as hard as they could, but they couldn't provide what most people believe kids need these days," stated Michelle in her admission interview for the UACM program. She explained how her upbringing influenced her perspective on her work,

> My parents weren't really there to do the things for me that they should have, so it was just kind of in my mind. I have a strong sense of self that I need to do what I need to do for myself.

As an applicant she described herself as hardworking, extremely organized, and during our interviews, she referred to herself as logical and a "type A personality." Michelle's work ethic and commitment to excellence was apparent in her education and work experience prior to becoming a teacher.

After earning a Bachelor of Arts in psychology from a major northeastern university, Michelle worked for three years as a supervisor in a wilderness behavioral health program that served troubled adolescents, an experience that she felt prepared her to teach children with a wide variety of needs. Michelle was quickly promoted to a supervisory position within the program, and her duties included not only managing the student groups, but also, collaborating with various mental health providers, coordinating the treatment plans, communicating with families, and managing crisis intervention. Michelle also worked as a childcare provider and a customer service manager for a small national marketing education magazine, giving her additional experience in work related to children and in customer service and supervisory functions.

Journey to Teaching

"Though I believe it is never too late to help students, I believe that intervening early is better," stated Michelle in her UACM admissions goals statement. "Children need to be offered things that encourage them to see alternatives and to encourage change," she continued. Michelle believed that teaching in an urban school that served culturally and linguistically diverse students was a good career choice for her, because of her knowledge and experiences with challenges faced by troubled young adults. Michelle recalled that many of the troubled young people she had worked lacked self-esteem and important life skills such as communication and teamwork. "That was a reason I came to elementary," she said. "I wanted to help them have those skills before they [grew up.]" Furthermore, she felt that her experiences had honed her organizational and leadership skills, giving her flexibility and the "ability to remain calm in very stressful situations."

Michelle recalled that the UACM program "spoke to me, and I felt it was the best," and she noted the program's emphasis on preparing teachers who could effectively serve students with the greatest needs matched her own "passion for working with underserved youth." Although her extensive experiences gave her confidence in her own ability to teach and what she felt was a realistic perspective on the complexity of the job, Michelle explained her purpose in applying for the UACM program,

> I feel that my passion along with the skills I've obtained while earning my BA in Psychology and my work history would allow me to be a GOOD teacher now. However, I want to be a GREAT teacher and that is why I am applying to the UACM program.

Michelle noted that she had researched various programs and pathways to teaching, but the extensive support offered by the UACM program to first-year teachers and the "passion and devotion" that she sensed from members of the department during the information session had confirmed her choice. During her admission interview she stated, "I see myself as a teacher in an urban elementary school ten years from now." After two years in the classroom, Michelle indicated that she had no intention of striving for a school administrative position in the future. She said, "When I picture myself, I picture myself retiring as a teacher."

School and Classroom Context

Michelle was a second-grade teacher completing her second year of teaching at a high-need urban school located within a high-need metropolitan-area school district near the city of Atlanta. She enjoyed teaching second grade, and she stated, "If students are struggling or behind, there is a possibility of catching them up. If I were teaching in a higher grade, it would be more difficult to work with kids to catch them up while also teaching the standards."

When Michelle was first assigned her class, she was told that the class would be designated Early Intervention Program (EIP), meaning that the number of students she would be

assigned would be kept to a low number to allow her to effectively differentiate and support the group. The population of the school, however, precluded limiting the number of students in the class, so Michelle's class assignment was finalized at 23 students. All but three of her students received ESOL support. An EIP teacher pushed in to Michelle's class during math to provide additional support, and the ESOL teacher pushed in to provide support during writing.

Michelle described her second year of teaching as a "very frustrating, stressful year," and she attributed much of the difficulty of the year to the fact that the students in her class came to second grade seriously behind academically, a situation that she felt was caused primarily by circumstances related to staffing shortages. She stated,

> My class last year – and I actually found out that some of them in kindergarten as well -- their teacher never came to school. So, their class was constantly broken up into small portions and put into the back of other teachers' classrooms. So, the majority of students in my class are well below grade level, meaning that they're probably on kindergarten grade level when they're supposed to be in second grade, and it's because they literally had no instruction last year.

Michelle explained that she had learned that many students in the class had experienced a similar situation during their Kindergarten year. She explained,

> I have kids who for two years didn't really have what they needed. So, I heard last year, through the grapevine, that I was going to be getting this class. And I was like, okay, well, my background is dealing with kids with behavioral – because I knew they were also coming with major behavioral issues, because they had no one to kind of teach them what they needed to do. All summer long I thought about it. Like I said, I knew it was going to be an issue, or a possibility that I was going to get this class. So, long story short, I got them. And basically what happened was they put most of the kids from those classes into my class right now. So, I have 23 kids that are all really, really struggling, which is fine. I'm up for the challenge. But it definitely made it a really hard year. And what made it mostly so hard was just seeing how far behind they were and knowing that it wasn't their fault that they had no instruction last year.

Michelle's classroom was located in a modular building that housed several of the 2nd grade classrooms clustered around a single hallway with restrooms and exit doors on each end of the

hall. The modular unit was one of several that the district had placed on the property to accommodate the burgeoning K-5 population of the neighborhood. The addition of the modular units eliminated parking that was already scarce, and teachers and visitors needed to park on a privately held lot a block from the school. The main school building dated back to 1958, and design elements of that decade were still evident in the signage, tile work, and window placements. Designed around hallways situated in a low-profile rectangular shape, the school had one spectacular feature, a large green space enclosed within the connected hallways that contained various raised vegetable and flower garden beds, picnic tables, towering shade trees, and green grass. Designated for closure in the 1980s, the school survived, receiving a reprieve from closure after neighborhood members launched a campaign to fight the district school board over the decision.

Despite the dated and limited facilities, the Title I school had earned a place in the spotlight within the school district and statewide for its innovative approaches to STEM integration. The school-wide commitment to two and a half hours of daily, integrated math, science, and engineering for each of its K-5 students along with monthly engineering design days was a model that drew a steady stream of visitors from within and outside of the district. Michelle noted that teachers at the school had "a heavy load," but she admitted, "I love this school." Michelle felt that living in a "transitional neighborhood" in the city of Atlanta enabled her to build connections with the community and the students at her school. The student body of over 800 self-identified as 86% Hispanic, 9% African American, 2% Asian Pacific Islander, 2% White, and 1% Other. The school ranked in the top 5% of Georgia's highest poverty schools, with more than one-third of the school's population living 50% or more below Georgia's poverty line.

Nomination and Recruitment to Study

Faculty members who nominated Michelle for the study remarked that she was a "good student," "a lifelong learner," and "committed to urban schools and diverse children." "She is so exceptional that in her second year of teaching she was assigned the job of grade chair," one faculty member commented. "She implements the curriculum with rigor through the use of effective strategies." Michelle's leadership abilities were evident, also, in nomination comments recognizing the "curricular and emotional support" that she provided for new UACM teachers in her school and for her success in presenting her classroom research at a national conference.

When I approached Michelle's principal regarding Michelle's possible participation in the study, she immediately expressed her agreement that Michelle was an effective teacher for diverse students. I contacted Michelle at the end of January 2015 to invite her to participate in the study, and we met soon after to discuss the study and to review and sign the informed consent. I met with Michelle nine different times between February 4 and May 28, 2015 for six personal and focus group interviews and three observations. The observations included one full-day classroom visit, and two self-selected events: a) an engineer-for-a-day design-build activity and b) a school wide 5K fundraiser. In addition, Michelle responded to emails and met with me one additional time for the purpose of clarification and member checking.

Advocacy = Commitment + Protection + Lifelong learning

When I asked Michelle why she thought that she had a reputation as an effective teacher, she said, "I think because I work really hard to make sure that I'm doing what my kids need." Considering the high-level of academic support and differentiation that Michelle's students needed, her statement that she worked hard at "doing what my kids need" did little to reveal the

complexity of that task. In fact, she acknowledged that the year had been extremely difficult, saying,

> By no means am I trying to sugar coat it. It's been a really hard year. But my goal is to think about what I want my end result to be, and for all these kids, it's a challenge. To me, it's a personal challenge. I'm going to do what I can so that they succeed. It sounds so cliché, but that is really how I think about this job now.

Michelle's prior experiences working with underserved youth were a source of realistic expectations for her coming to her position in an urban high-need school. In her program application goals statement, she wrote, "I am also aware that teaching and working with youth can be very challenging." At the end of her second year of teaching, though, she admitted that although she expected challenges, she still was not prepared for how difficult the work would be. "When everyone says, 'It's going to be hard. It's going to be hard,'" she said. "Like, I had no idea exactly how hard it would be." The difficulty of the work underscored her previously held belief that urban schools needed quality teachers. She stated,

> It just seems like that would be the place [high-need schools] where you would put the most qualified [teachers]. Not that any school should have under-qualified teachers, but it just seems like these kids should have the most. It just—it would make sense, if you want these kids to succeed.

For Michelle, quality teaching included advocacy for urban schools and stakeholders that was an "all-encompassing" commitment and extended more broadly to include the teaching profession as a whole. Foundational to her commitment to the entire enterprise of teaching in urban high-need schools was a solid conviction that the children she served deserved respect and consideration because of their value as human beings. In fact, in her admission interview Michelle discussed her belief that treating children with respect was the best way to connect with children who came from backgrounds different from her own, saying, "Children are intelligent

no matter [the] circumstances. Promote a sense of trust and let them know you are there for them."

Advocating for her students also included challenging and defying labels that others had previously and/or potentially sought to apply to her students. Michelle maintained a critical stance and purposefully used appropriate classroom management and instructional approaches as supports for her students' successes. A sense of anticipatory advocacy was the bedrock of Michelle's work to free her students of labels, since she was keenly aware of the potential impact on their immediate emotional well being as well as their future adult lives. Michelle explained to colleagues during a focus-group interview how caring for her students' sense of self was part of her vision for her work, by saying,

> I actually feel a little bit teary eyed for some reason. My parents were not very supportive of me growing up, so most of my support came from my teachers, but when you think about the kids that we have, oftentimes, their teachers don't support them either. So my main goal in being a teacher was just to let them know that there is someone there to support them, and I, unlike you, I don't see everything positively, because I understand that, in all honesty, the odds can be stacked against them. But I want them to understand that they can overcome those obstacles as well, as long as they believe in themselves, and if it takes me giving them that push and helping them with work, then that's what I – like I said, that's what pushed me into the field anyway.

One way that Michelle gave her students "that push" to overcoming obstacles was though her commitment them as lifelong learners. She modeled a love of learning, and used ambitious teaching practices in her classroom, practices that go beyond teaching the curriculum standards to include experiences with authentic problem solving resulting in deep thinking and peer-to-peer intellectual dialogue. Although Michelle recognized that some teachers felt that this kind of teaching was too labor intensive and out of reach for students who struggled academically, she firmly adhered to it as part of her vision for her work as an advocate for her students. She said,

> Someone asked me, I don't even remember what it was, but they walked by the other day and they're like, "Why do we have to do that?" [engineering, design-build teamwork] and I'm like, "Well, that's just another part of the job. It is what it is." I mean, that's – even if the kids came from a different background, I still feel like they spend the majority of their time with us during the school year, so how would you not think that was part of your job as well? Social skills, interpersonal relationship skills, resolving conflict, I mean taking care of themselves, washing their hands, brushing their teeth. I mean, I have all of these conversations with my students.

Michelle felt that ambitious teaching was advocacy for her students, because it gave them equitable educational experiences through the incorporation of manipulatives, active learning, cooperative groups, and time dedicated to problem solving and experimentation. Her goal was to develop her students' capacity for logical thinking and effective communication.

Michelle's approach to advocacy began with the "all-encompassing" commitment that she had made to urban students and schools, and to the teaching profession as a whole. Her core belief that all children deserve and respond best to respect led to her to challenge and defy negative labeling of her students. With the notion of teaching toward her students' futures as a guiding principle, Michelle was determined to develop her students as lifelong learners, and she adhered to ambitious teaching practices to teach her students to love learning and to know how to learn and think independently. Those three themes related to her work as a teacher advocate emerged from my analysis of the data associated with Michelle: a) advocating by making an "all-encompassing" commitment, b) advocating by protecting students from labels, and c) advocating by fostering lifelong learning.

Theme One: Advocating by Making an "All-encompassing" Commitment to Students

Michelle viewed her work as a teacher of students in an urban high-need school as a difficult endeavor worthy of an "all-encompassing" commitment that included a substantial

personal investment. When I asked Michelle to describe exactly what was "hard" about the job, she explained,

> Teaching. All of it. Every bit. Everything. Because when you really care it's hard to – I mean, I go home and I have dreams about my kids. I mean, when you really care– it's an all-encompassing job.

In addition to feeling a deep sense of responsibility toward her students, Michelle noted that she felt a broader sense of responsibility to the school community, She stated, "I don't look at my class as the only kids I'm responsible for." She explained that she could "walk down the hallway, and kids from everywhere" spoke to her. "It's nice to feel like they all know you," she said. "I could just never imagine not feeling responsible for everyone there." This deep sense of responsibility was demonstrated through large investments of time, intellectual focus, emotional energy, and money that Michelle gave to her students and to her school.

Time. After viewing her capstone video assignment with me and pointing out a quote by Plato that she had included in the project, Michelle discussed the pressure she felt to produce significant gains for her students in a short amount of time. The quote, "Do not train children to learning by force and harshness, but direct them to it by what amuses their minds, so that you may be better able to discover with accuracy the particular bent of the genius of each," represented her vision for her own classroom. In fact, I had observed her efforts at creative exploration and high expectations during my visits to her classroom. She reflected that although she did worry about coming across as harsh toward her students, she felt pressured by the intensity of the job before her. She stated,

> Just reading that quote again and just knowing that – I just feel like I'm on such a deadline, and it's not – I just want them to move up so far that sometimes I feel like I'm really like, "We need to do this! We need to do that!"

Michelle elaborated on the reality of the urgency of her work, stating,

> It stems from knowing that I want them to grow so much that I'm trying to fit so much in, and I'm seeing great success, and I definitely like second semester. I've come back, and I've seen so much growth, and I'm able to kind of calm down a bit, but first semester, just knowing how far behind they were and what I wanted them to achieve, because I want it for myself. I want it for them.

The significant amount of time that Michelle needed to invest in lesson planning and resource gathering to accommodate each student in her class took time away from extracurricular events Michelle wished she could attend outside of her classroom.

"I spend my life at the library, the public and the school library," she said. "You just get so caught up in the everyday." The heavy load of outside research and preparation was more than Michelle had anticipated prior to becoming a teacher. She explained,

> When I became a teacher I envisioned myself – because, like I said, in my past job I couldn't communicate with the kids outside of work. Now, I know as a teacher I can do that. So, in my mind I was like, "Oh, maybe I can go to their soccer games or do things like that." I honestly haven't had time to do that this year.

She elaborated on the pressure she felt to adequately address her students' academic needs.

> This year I would like to do more. Again, like, I don't really know. This year has been so busy. I don't really know what that would look like for me, like, this year was more about figuring out how to just, you know, teach my kids what they needed to know for second grade.

For her particular class that year, Michelle felt that her advocacy was essentially classroom centered. She explained,

> I feel like my advocating for them is spending the hours researching activities, like a video this morning I spent like an hour, and I know it's just a silly video, but it was something else for them to have a visual. But it took an hour to sit down and find that video, and of course I could've made it myself, but it would've taken even longer. Just doing things like that. Just trying to make sure that I meet with each kid, because they all – they're all below grade level. They all have very different needs, so I guess, when I think about it, trying to just make sure that their lessons are appropriate for them, but I'm still teaching them the second-grade standards that they need to know.

Michelle acknowledged the pull she felt to provide for all of her students' needs. "So, just kind of finding that balance. And that's been a lot harder than I ever would have thought."

Achieving balance was especially difficult within Michelle's school context. The culture of the school was one of very high expectations for teachers, and the expectations included responsibilities not typically required of teachers that necessitated additional hours of work before and after school and on weekends. Michelle explained,

> I would be lying if I didn't say that I'm not always happy that I am thrown into all these extra things that the school asks me to do, because I do honestly feel like that takes away time from my classroom. I'm the type of person where I really [want to] feel strong in what I'm doing, which would be teaching, before I have to take on all these other responsibilities, and that's just not the way that it worked out. So, I'm finding myself having to juggle. How do I mentor this new teacher when I'm still trying to do these things for myself? I'm currently in a [district] new teacher program for three years but at the same time, I'm being asked to do things for other new teachers. On the other hand, it does fit in with my view. I do have really strong beliefs and views of how I want schools, especially public schools, to run and be organized, and so I feel like I'm as best as any other person to stand up for those beliefs and values.

Although Michelle's beliefs aligned with the culture of her school, she struggled to find balance between the time commitment she felt her work required and the culture of the school and her own personal life. In fact, she had seriously considered transferring to another school the following year. She explained,

> Two weeks ago I told the assistant principal and the principal that I was thinking about transferring, because the school has – we have a very heavy load, plus the hours that I spend, plus the class that I have right now. It's just – it's been a really tough year, and I'm just – meeting after meeting– I never have time to sit down and do anything. And, by all means, I do take my work home, but I also have to find that balance. I can't spend six hours every single night researching things. My husband is like, "You need to figure it out, because this is not going to work."

Spending large amounts of time in addition to the school day was a commitment that Michelle made to her students, and she struggled to find a way to balance the extra hours in her life.

Intellectual focus. In addition to committing a great deal of time to the work of teaching, Michelle envisioned her intellectual work as advocacy for her students. “Every day I wake up, and I’m like, ‘What can I do differently today?’” she said. Michelle approached the work of teaching as an intellectual pursuit, saying, “Sometimes you have to really step back and think about what you’re doing.” She was firm in her belief that each class and each student required fresh eyes and approaches, and she continuously strove to improve her practices, decrying the use of one-size-fits-all curriculums and activities such as worksheets that she deemed “old fashioned.”

Michelle demonstrated her commitment to continuous intellectual and professional growth by constantly reflecting, reading, and researching to find new ways to meet her students’ needs. “So, it's kind of like having that initiative, that desire inside yourself to seek out something,” she said. Michelle also acknowledged, though, that she could not plan too far in advance for all of her students’ needs, stating, **“**As Type A as I am, it's something you can't really tell until you meet your kids and see what it is that they need.” She noted that each class was different, and even literacy strategies were subject to change. “I used [reading curriculum],” she stated. “But it wasn't really working for these kids as much as it did for my kids last year, so I looked up other things that are more phonics-based.”

Reading professional books on teaching and searching out read-aloud picture books to support the content areas, particularly science and social studies, was a regular routine for Michelle. She told me that she regularly purchased her own professional books, and she commented on the professional book, *Ladybugs, Tornadoes, and Swirling Galaxies: English Language Learners Discover Their World through Inquiry*, which she was reading as a

participant in her school's professional learning book clubs. She recommended it to her colleagues as a resource for preparing for the state mandated assessment, saying,

> That book that I'm reading right now, [sic] *the butterfly, the tornado…*, I really like it because it gives the kids a chance to choose what topic they want to write on and do posters or projects, but you can choose, but then write a little bit more to prepare yourself for the test.

I observed Michelle's use of two special ed to support instruction on science standards related to changes in the environment: *Wangari's Trees of Peace: A True Story from Africa* and *Planting the Trees of Kenya: The Story of Wangari Maathai*. Michelle explained how she acquired the texts,

> I found that through my research last year. So, our science unit is *changes in the environment* and that [text] correlates [with] that standard as well as our reading unit, comparing and contrasting texts on the same subject. So, when I was researching special ed and science for this unit, I found those two books, and I got them from the – I forgot the exact – like the National Science Teachers Association.

Researching broad topics on the Internet was another strategy that Michelle relied on to make and to support her decisions as a teacher. One instance was when her grade-level team disagreed on the feasibility of creating identical curriculum binders for the group to use, Michelle explained,

> Their goal was to have a binder with everything that they were going to do every single day. And I actually went home that night and I tried to do some research on lesson plan sharing just to see if maybe I was being inflexible, and maybe I needed to rethink that. But what I found online supported what I currently thought, that you can't take a binder and have your day planned for every single year because, as I told them, every class is not the same.

Michelle's intellectual commitment was not solely focused on her own students and school. She also was planning a presentation of her classroom research at a national literacy conference that was being held in her area. She stated,

> I'm presenting my work, the read-aloud work with [professor name], this summer. So, I feel like, in a way, that's kind of maybe not advocating for the kids, but helping teachers see that you don't just have to sit down and use your textbook all the time. I'm excited about that, because I do see a lot of people – I mean, I don't use my textbooks that much. I feel like they are engaging, and when I pull them out the kids really like them, but they're so far above their heads, and there's not really a lot of conversation you can have around what you see [in the textbooks]. So, the whole thing was about read-alouds. So, again, just kind of maybe sharing that you can bring in a read-aloud and have the same effect, if not more understanding, than just sitting doing a worksheet or textbook. So, I guess, that's either sharing my thoughts, or maybe advocating for kids in general.

Michelle demonstrated continuous intellectual and professional growth that supported her instruction and influence on her colleagues and the teaching profession as a whole.

Emotional energy. Another aspect of the "all-encompassing" commitment that Michelle applied as advocacy for her students was emotional energy that she gave to building relationships with her students and their parents and her colleagues. Michelle had explained during her application interview her belief that connecting with urban children who came from backgrounds different from her own was a matter of building relationships. She said, "Promote a sense of trust, and let them know you are there for them." She explained her background and beliefs about the importance of relationships to learning.

> I think that relationship is very important and having a background working with teenagers, I think I learned that very quickly. If you don't have a personal relationship, if they don't respect you, then no one is ever going to listen to you. I took that into younger grades, and that works exactly the same way. My class was that class where everyone said they couldn't behave. They said they couldn't believe I had that class and that they wouldn't even sit in their seats. Now they walk by, and say, "Whoa! Those kids aren't getting in trouble."

Michelle recognized that while her emotional commitment was not the norm, it was firmly situated within her vision for her work, and she noted that she had "a different relationship with my kids." "I want to make sure when they're at school that they have that support that they would get when they're at home," she explained.

Building relationships with the parents of her students also required commitment of emotional energy, and it was an effort that Michelle had identified even within her program admissions interview as a likely challenge in urban teaching environments. In the interview Michelle noted, “Parents care about their children, but there are so many challenges [to parental involvement].” “Finding a way to work with parents who are facing working two jobs” was a personal goal for her prior to beginning her teacher preparation program.

Michelle attended a school-sponsored 5K fundraiser at her school on a Saturday morning, and this was one of the events she selected for me to observe. She explained why attending the event was a priority for despite the fact that she was too overwhelmed with work inside of her classroom to take on many of the extra family engagement events she would have liked to support.

> I think that it's just nice to show the parents and the kids that you're there to support them when they've decided to put themselves out there and do something new. As I've said in the other interviews, this year it's been really stressful. We actually had the portfolio night the other night, and I always get nervous about things like that, because you hear horror stories, “Oh, the parents are so mean,” and all of this stuff, but I left that night thinking, it's so silly. I'm always so nervous, but I really enjoy interacting with the parents, like they're so nice and they're so grateful. So I left thinking, “Wow, it was such a good night!” and I felt the same way with the 5K. It's just nice to be there with the parents and get to talk to them and not be in such a rush. Our conferences are usually 10 minutes long, and that's if they show up on time. Our conferences are literally me standing up with a line of people just handing out information. So you can say, “Hi,” and you try to be as personable as you can, but activities like that [portfolio night] just give you some more – like I was holding one of the kid's puppies. I was able to interact with them more than what I am in the classroom. You get to know the parents and the kids on a more individual basis. I like that.

As I observed Michelle at the 5K, she interacted with several of her students and their parents. She explained that she spoke frequently with several of the mothers of her students, and even got to know the grandparents of some families. Getting to know the extended families of her students had allowed her to advocate for children whose grandparents were highly involved in

childrearing and who maintained beliefs that were clashing with the parents' intuition about what was best for their children.

In addition to her belief in the importance of building relationships with her students and their parents, Michelle believed that productive relationships with grade-level colleagues led to a better educational environment, but she struggled to come to terms with differences in her beliefs and actions and those of her peers. Working on improving collaboration and teamwork with her colleagues required a substantial amount of emotional energy, and she actually struggled with hurt feelings and loss of sleep over some of the disputes that were centered on sharing of lesson plans. She stated,

> It's making me feel kind of hurt, to be honest with you. Yeah, because I mean, they brought me in as grade-level chair. I felt, because my team has always had issues in the past. I kind of felt that they put me there to be the leader and maybe to glue the team together. It hurt my feelings, and I've actually lost two nights sleep over it, because I just kept replaying it over – I mean, I know it sounds sad, but it's – at the same time I'm just not willing to compromise on this. I guess, as the person who's now grade-level chair, I do have to figure out – I have to choose my battles.

Working with colleagues outside of her grade level was also frustrating at times for Michelle. She explained,

> But during lunch, like, other grade-level chair people were asking me questions, again, about things we already talked about. We start a new writing unit next week, and they were like, "What's our topic? What's our topic?" And this is just the frustrating part of the job. I can get the kids to do what they need to do, but I can't get the grown-ups to do what they need to do. So sometimes it can be that I walk out of my classroom, and it can be so frustrating and then you have to come back in and just put on your best face and be like, "Okay, I'm so annoyed, but now I'm all happy again." I feel like a crazy person with crazy emotions at times.

"I want the people that I'm working with to have the same passion and desire that I have to put in the effort," stated Michelle. Coming to terms with the differing expectations and commitments

represented by her colleagues added an additional emotional strain to the efforts Michelle made to developing relationships with her students and their parents.

Financial. In addition to large amounts of time and intellectual and emotional energy, Michelle committed her own financial means and worked to secure additional funds and supplies to provide both personal and academic resources that she felt her students needed. Michelle attended to physical needs that she observed among her students as part of her commitment. She stated,

> We have lice problems at my school. Like, I purchase lice combs for my kids. When they don't have a coat, I go out and buy coats for them. So, I do a lot of things for my [kids]. Being a teacher is kind of like being, I guess, like an assistant parent at some point. My husband and I spent like three hours the other day looking for coats because all the places around here were sold out, and I had three kids that didn't have a winter coat. And when I kept asking them, "Where is your coat?" and they wear a hoodie, and they're like, "This is my coat." I'm like, "That is not a coat." But again, when you care it's hard to just send them – because our classroom is outside too, so we have to spend a lot of time going back and forth in the rain and – transitioning. But yeah, I'm lucky that my husband supports me in that too.

During periods of standardized testing Michelle planned for interruptions and schedule changes,

> Our schedule changed so much [during testing]. Specials were cut to only 30 minutes. The specials teachers came into our classrooms. Lunch was delayed about two hours, and the kids are like, "I'm hungry. I don't know what's going on." So I had snacks for them in my room.

Because of the wide-ranging academic needs of her students, providing instructional resources required even more financial commitment than was needed for physical needs. "I feel like I need to be seeking out things that are going to be meeting them where they are," Michelle stated. She explained how procuring extra and specialized resources was part of her vision of advocacy for her students, saying,

> And money, some of the math activities I just bought, we had that snow day, so I went – but, I just feel like we need them, and that's what – I guess, by definition, that is advocating for my kids. But I also feel like I wouldn't be doing my job if I

> didn't do those things, and really, a lot of teachers don't do that. Before I bought some of those math activities I was sitting here like, “We need something more hands-on.” And we have a math room here that's really nice, but we didn't have the activity I was looking for. I don't feel that I would be doing what I need to do for the kids if I just say, “Oh, it would be great to have that,” and just never get it.

Michelle also purchased special special ed for the classroom to ensure having appropriate texts to support content instruction, particularly for students whose reading levels were significantly below grade-level. She stated,

> I've gotten so frustrated with spending so much time in the library that I started purchasing a lot of the books, so I don't have to go back. I mean I will still do it, because I always find new things, but, yeah, I spend a lot of time.

Providing for the academic needs of her students was never ending, and within her first year of teaching Michelle sought out creative ways to provide additional resources for her students. “I never really thought I would apply for grants,” she said. “But, I've done that.” “I won a grant, a thousand dollars for a garden at our school,” she said. “It is for a bog garden in the courtyard area, and then we have an outdoor classroom grant that we will supplement too.” She explained how grant awards fit with her vision for teacher advocacy,

> For them to have other activities or resources that, you know, maybe I couldn't have supplied, because I do spend a lot of money, but there's also a point where I don't want to do that myself. I had to take time to research things that I thought would be meaningful to present to the class, to apply for the grant. The gardening grant, like, a lot of their teachers don't want to take their kids outside– it directly correlates. We have a life cycles unit. So, it directly correlates to what they need to know. And I had kids the other day, when we were talking about where things come from, they think that the food in the supermarket just shows up there. They don't understand that it grows. One has to make it. So, I feel like it's giving them the life experience to understand where these things come from. So, I do think that's really important.
>
> I mean, again, that's still like advocating for them within the realm of the schoolhouse, but it's still getting them outside of the school. I won another grant for resources for my classroom, reading resources. So, just trying to find ways to get what I need and just kind of offer them different resources or activities to do. That's where I spend the most of my time right now.

Michelle used her own financial resources to pay for extra personal needs and academic resources as well as securing outside funding through grants.

Summary – Theme One: Advocating by Making an "All-encompassing" Commitment to Students

Michelle envisioned her work as a teacher advocate as an "all-encompassing" commitment that included significant investments of her time, intellectual focus, emotional energy, and financial resources. She felt that her colleagues did not always demonstrate this same commitment, and she commented on the common misconception among her colleagues that her hard work sprang from her desire to propel herself toward an administrative position. She stated,

> I think because I work so hard, and I do all of this extra stuff that I do, most of the people receive me well, because I feel like a lot of people at the school have a similar vision. There are a few, though, that I feel like they think I'm working this hard, because my goal is to move up to a higher position in administration. And I have to constantly tell those people that that's not my goal. "I came to be a teacher. I do not ever want to be an administrator in a school." If my trajectory takes me somewhere else, maybe it would be working in a program like the UACM program, something like that. Teacher training. I have no desire to be an administrator. And when I picture myself, I picture myself retiring as a teacher. And it's really hard for people to understand why I put in all of this work – they don't understand.

Michelle coped with professional weathering forces that could have worn down her "all-encompassing" commitment by resisting negative colleagues and drawing strength from her successes to sustain her work.

Resisting. Besides the fact that some of Michelle's colleagues did not understand the source of her commitment to her students, she struggled to come to terms with conflicts that arose as a result of her resistance to what she perceived as shallow commitments to the work of teaching. She stated,

> I ask myself that every day. "Why is everyone else able to go home and not think about work" but yet, I think about my students? I mean, within reason, but when I

> go on vacation, I look for books to bring back for my class, so I don't know. I think it's the combination of personal experience and personality traits and work ethic. It's a combination of everything that some people have, and some people just don't have, like being empathetic towards other people, being able to understand where people are coming from, having the ability to look at the future and know where you want people to go, knowing what you'd like the world to look like. I know that sounds idealistic, but someone has to work to do something.

While Michelle adopted an accommodative stance toward teachers who she determined were "just not like her," she employed strategies to resist when she felt that those conflicts had the potential to interfere with her vision for her commitment to her students. She resorted to research to confirm her positions, and she noted, "I have to choose my battles."

One such battle that Michelle described was a conflict with members of her grade-level team regarding lesson sharing and planning. She described the conflict and the subsequent compromise they agreed upon,

> I feel like [some colleagues'] vision is to have a classroom where their students are learning, but to make it as easy on themselves as possible. Like, if they can just find an old-fashioned idea like a worksheet, that will be fine. You know, if teaching phonics from a box like we just got, like, "That will be fine, because someone bought it. It will probably work great." But as far as putting in any extra effort, "I'm not going to do that." Yeah. So, I'm sure they're well-meaning. And I kind of feel like they just think, like, "Oh, it worked for some of them [students]. It should work for everyone."
>
> And I said, "I spend hours, literally hours researching activities and ideas, and especially this year because of the level that my class is on." And they let me know, "We will never do that." They don't want to spend the extra time doing the research that it sometimes takes to develop lessons.
>
> My compromise was that we each bring in activities that we would like to share, and that if it works for your classroom then you use the activity, but you do your own lesson plans, because I don't think that every single classroom needs to be doing exactly the same thing at exactly the same moment. And I stood my ground on that, and it's causing a little bit of a rift. It absolutely drives my vision to the point where I'm pretty firm on what I want to happen in my classroom. And I'm more than willing to share my ideas and even the activities that I'm using with other people, but I'm not going to compromise to a one-size-fits-all where everyone's sitting in a classroom just reading out of a textbook or doing a worksheet, and that's kind of what they're looking for.

Michelle was very clear about times when she would draw the line, saying, “I've walked into classrooms where they're just copying a paragraph off the board, and that is my – I can't stand that, and they'll never have that in my classroom.” Working with her colleagues could be more challenging than working with students, Michelle explained,

> I actually jokingly said the other day that maybe my coworker is right about me, and I'm not a team player, because it's easier when I get to do it by myself. I mean I like to think that I am, but I don't like to waste time, and when I feel like people are saying things that are just not thought out or, you know, like they just don't make any sense. I just don't really have time to tolerate that, and so it was kind of funny, but I was like, “Maybe I'm not.”

Support from her administrators bolstered Michelle’s resistance to her colleagues’ negative attitudes toward her “all-encompassing” commitment to her students. After consulting with her principal about her grade-level team conflict, she said, “I feel like they heard what I said.” She explained,

> But the principal was very receptive and she was like, “I'm really glad that you came to talk to me about it. Usually when people lash out like that it's because they have something else going on.” So, anyway, she was very, very receptive about the whole thing. Yeah. She gave some suggestions on things to do in the future.

At the end of the school year Michelle was encouraged that her school administrators were making changes that she had suggested in an effort to improve the effectiveness of her grade-level team. She stated,

> I'm very excited about this. I had my summative meeting, and all the issues we've been talking about this year, my principal actually listened to me. She's taking two of my suggestions and she's decided that she agrees. So I'm very, very happy about that, because it's been a very frustrating, stressful year – for various reasons, so it was just really nice to hear that –She feels like I've done a good job this year kind of bringing the team together, and that she sees that, so I'm very excited about that.

Michelle resisted pressure from colleagues whose commitment to students was less than her own by standing firm on her decisions, drawing confidence from her own knowledge and research and the support of her building administrators.

Sustaining. While administrative support reinforced Michelle's resistance to negative colleagues, it was also a force in her ability to sustain her commitment to her students. When discussing the concept of being an agent of change within schools, Michelle stated, "I do feel that is who I am intrinsically." Being able to see the results of her work both as an influence on her peers and on her students fueled Michelle's will to continue her total commitment to her students despite her fatigue and occasional discouragement. "Even in my second year, they are sending new teachers in to observe what I'm doing in my classroom," she pointed out. Also, Michelle was noticing positive changes in the commitment of her colleagues as evidenced by their participation in extracurricular activities. She described her feelings about the influence of her consistent commitment on her colleagues,

> I can't help but maybe wonder a little bit if, maybe, because I do these extra things, they're kind of – I mean it's a little bit like, maybe thinking too highly of what I'm doing, but at the same time I thought it very interesting that people who have never come to activities before were at the 5K on Saturday. So, and the same thing for the character book parade, people who aren't usually involved in things were dressed up.
>
> So at the very least even though there's a lot of pushback, I mean having been here last year, my grade never participated in anything. Now granted we have new people who, their styles are a little bit more like mine, but there were also other people who I was just absolutely shocked that they were there, and they were. So at the very least, there's something going on, where either they're looking at what we were doing, or they just want to be involved for whatever reason, but I think it's a good thing, because I think it's important to see the entire – just to see everyone pull together and do something outside of the norm.

Perhaps even more encouraging for Michelle than seeing her colleagues' increased commitment was the realization that her students were making dramatic improvements academically and socially. Michelle explained the academic growth she was seeing in her students,

> I have kids who came in 0.8, 0.9 level for reading and math, and they're jumping up to anywhere from 1.7 to 3.0, which is insane. I mean, they still need help, they're still below grade level, but I've been really, really excited to see – And I share that with them too, because I'm having them bring, like we do AR [Accelerated Reader] thing here, so they all have the dots on their library card, so as their levels are moving up it's exciting to be like, "Yay, you're not on the – level." It's silly – but for them it's exciting, because that's what the entire school does. But, yeah, so it's nice to share that with them, and write notes to their parents and say, "Your child came in on kindergarten math level, and now she's on a third grade math." I've actually had that. So, it's really, really exciting just to see that.

The efforts that Michelle made to bring in additional resources to support her students' learning also produced obvious results. She explained,

> I have a kid who just literally learned the alphabet, all the sounds, last week, but that student can tell me that friction will make something stop…It's really cool to see how much they get when you actually take the time to bring in whatever. Yeah, but I'm excited.

Student growth was such a source of inspiration for Michelle that she was already looking ahead to the next year and finding the positive outcomes from the challenges of her second year of teaching. She stated,

> This year has been exceptionally stressful for me. I had kids all on kindergarten levels, and I was so idealistic thinking I was going to move them up to the third-grade level they needed to be on, and that didn't work out. But on a positive note, I'm actually really excited about next year, because I feel like I saw how much they grew this year, and even though it was so hard, and sometimes I'm like, "I don't even know if we're going to make it through." When they gave me the kids, I was like, "What am I going to do?" but just seeing how much they grew and having that experience, and just having a history of how they started and where they are now. It just – so, no, I'm not going to change. My plan is not to change anything. It's just like, "What can I do to even further improve what I did this year if it worked, and next year I can make it work even better."

Michelle was able to sustain her "all-encompassing" commitment to her students by focusing on positive changes she noticed in her colleagues' work and focusing on her students' academic improvements and increased social maturity.

Theme Two: Advocating by Protecting Students from Labels

While Michelle advocated for her students by making substantial personal investments of time, emotional and intellectual energy, and money, she also advocated for her students by protecting them from negative labels, both by challenging labels that others had previously or currently sought to apply as well as by erasing labels that were already associated with her students. Michelle felt that negative labels could play a role in defining students and limiting their future possibilities. Positively influencing her students' self-images was an intention that she expressed in her UACM application goals statement. She wrote, "My goal, as an urban elementary school teacher, is to instill a sense of self-worth and desire to succeed in my students early on, thus building a foundation to become successful later in life." Michelle pursued this goal by maintaining a critical stance against labels and purposefully cultivating appropriate classroom management and managing instructional supports for her students' successes. Michelle also firmly committed to an attitude of high expectations for her students and guarded their futures through teaching academic and life skills. Personal experience and a sense of anticipatory advocacy were the bedrock of Michelle's efforts to liberate her students from labels; she was keenly aware of the ways those labels could define them, impacting their emotional well-being as well as their lives as adults.

Challenging and defying labels. Michelle drew on her own personal schooling experience as evidence of the importance of critically analyzing any labels that were already

associated with her students or that were under consideration by the education system. She explained,

> When kids start getting labeled for things that aren't their fault— that could have very easily been me, but I was the kid who just happened to be a good student that happened to fit the mold. But then you look at my brother, he didn't fit that mold, and he has that record to follow, and it affected him. I mean, he didn't finish school because of – not just that, but I think that plays a big part.
>
> So, it is very important to me, and I see boys especially – a lot of the boys in my class, I look at them. Girls – obviously girls have their own issues, but sometimes I think that girls, they listen – maybe because I'm a female teacher, but I feel like the girls listen to me more. So, sometimes I definitely feel like I do need to be a little bit more protective of the boys. And not that I don't give the girls my same [attention], but – I feel like people are so quick to label, and some boys already had major labels. "They don't know anything. They can't sit in a classroom. They're crazy."

Michelle explained how understanding the background of her class was important to her ability to counteract negative labels.

> For this class in particular I just felt like because it wasn't their fault that they were in this position, I really wanted to show people that they could achieve a lot more than maybe what was to be expected. I mean, at the beginning of the year we were having our meetings about what to expect on their reading growth, and I kept asking the administrators, "Well, what number should I be striving for? Just so I get an idea." And they kept saying, "Oh, don't worry about it. They'll be fine. Just show some growth." And I felt like it was because people think that this class, that there's really no hope for them. And I'm like, "No, really. What number?" Not that I'm gauging everything I do on a number, but if every kid is supposed to grow 50 points, then I want these kids to try and grow 100 points. You know? Like, I want to know what the zone is. So –pushing them, so they can do more than what I feel like the expectations for them from other people have been.

After drawing on her own personal educational experiences and learning about her students' educational histories, Michelle used classroom management, pedagogical expertise, and high expectations to defy negative labels that had been placed on her students.

Managing behavior to erase labels. Michelle was not only keenly aware of negative labels that were in place for her students, observing and reflecting on the possible causes of those

labels, but she also actively attacked negative assumptions about her students by using responsive classroom management to support their success in school. She explained how she approached the task,

> I constantly heard that they were the worst class in the entire school, that they didn't know how to do anything, so we worked on behavior first. You know, being consistent with my rules, my classroom management, to the point where I have had people come up to me telling me now that they're the best class in the entire school. Like the music teacher, they get a sticker every single time. Little things like that, that even though they're still labeled as the really bad class, people are noticing that they're not really bad, I guess. And to me, that's a big deal, because it's a lot of boys. Like I said, I have a soft place for boys, and I think that boys are overly labeled as rambunctious and problem kids, and some of these kids in particular had already been labeled that. So, just to have people come up and be like, "That kid, really? He's doing this now?" It's really exciting. So, that's one way I feel like I advocate for them is just trying to erase that label that they've been given by having people come and see that they really are working, the conversations that they're having – just little things like that.

Michelle relied on her knowledge of principles of responsive classroom management and developmentally appropriate expectations to set up routines, rules, and logical consequences to support her students' successes. She emphasized her feeling that teachers should treat children "like human beings," understanding them and being reasonable about expectations for their behavior. For example, she recalled,

> A teacher came to me and told me that there was just really something wrong with a student, and was proud of herself, because she made him cry in the back of the classroom one day, because he wouldn't sit in his seat. Now does he sit in his seat [in my classroom]? Absolutely not. Do I care? Within reason, but we have rules set up for that too. He knows when he needs to sit, and he tries to test that, but he's come really far considering where he was at the beginning of the year.

She elaborated on her approach,

> It kind of goes back to being proactive instead of reactive and thinking about the things that you're doing before you do them and also having logical consequences. I mean a child using bad language, losing five minutes of recess. He probably needs those five minutes of recess as a break, so I think that is really important too.

> But you also kind of have to choose your battles. I still have about seven boys that are really active and my expectation for them is not, you have to sit in your seat all day long. “You can stand up. You can move around; you can do the things that you need to do.”

Michelle felt that recess was an important part of the school day, particularly for her second-grade students. “I have an issue with teachers who don’t take kids outside for recess,” she said. She was critical of administrative directives and suggestions that she felt would undermine her students’ routines and opportunities for physical exercise, and she protected her students by making her own decisions for them based on what she believed was ultimately in their best interests. She described one situation that had arisen at her school when playground space became limited,

> The younger kids were asked not to go outside at all during the morning time, and then we were actually asked to rotate days between the upper grades and lower grades so they wouldn't all be out there together. And, I said, “I'm not going to do that.” I mean it's ridiculous. It was raining all last week. We weren't able to really go outside, so I'm like, “We're going outside. We have to when we can.” If we can't go outside, because it's raining or something, I try to make sure I have a lot of activities where we're up moving around the room and things like that.

Another example of Michelle’s proactive decision making to protect her students’ potential for successful behavior occurred on Field Day.

> On Field Day they wanted all the teachers to come out and have a big kickball game between the teachers and fourth and fifth grade students, which meant that my second-grade class, if I wanted to participate, would have been just sitting on the sidelines for an hour or two waiting. Initially, I was thinking it would be kind of cool to participate in this school event, but then it was so hot that day, and it was so dusty, and my kids, they had a really hard time, struggling, waiting their turn for the tug-of-war game. So, I felt that it wasn't in their best interests to make them sit there while I played a game with someone else, so instead we stayed inside and played games together. So, it was kind of that conflict of, do I want to participate in this school event, or do I want to do what's best for my class, and I decided my class was more important.

Beyond turning down the kickball game to protect her students from excessive wait time and physical discomfort, Michelle recognized the deeper implication of staying with her students. She elaborated,

> But it wasn't even just that, having them sitting there when they couldn't sit there or they didn't want to sit there just 20 minutes waiting their turn when they were actually involved in the game. Like, why am I going to hand them over to someone else and make them sit there for an hour? It's supposed to be their day as well. So we didn't do it.

Dealing with drastic changes to the schedule, particularly during standardized testing windows, was a challenge that Michelle also proactively addressed to protect her students.

> This is just a really small thing, but our schedule changed so much, and specials were cut to only 30 minutes. The specials teachers came into our classrooms to teach. Lunch was delayed about two hours, and the kids are like, "I'm hungry! I don't know what's going on." So I had snacks in my room. I would keep them posted, like, "This is what time it is. This is what time we're going. This is what we're doing." Just to kind of give them an idea. You can't just, with eight-year-olds, you can't just say, "Oh, I'm going to change your entire day around."

Michelle also used responsive classroom management to support student-centered learning and to build community and ownership of the classroom. She explained,

> I feel like the management part-- that just has to be in place for me to be able to do the other things that I want to do. It helps them to understand the routines and rules, and I try to explain why we do things. I really just think that you have to have classroom management if you want to be able to do the other things.

Michelle used responsive classroom management strategies to provide a structure to support her students' success and erase negative impressions and to allow for student-centered learning and community building.

Using pedagogical knowledge to erase labels. In addition to using responsive classroom management to erase negative labels applied to her students, Michelle used her pedagogical knowledge to critically examine and carefully manage her students' academic supports and activities and to incorporate culturally relevant strategies into her teaching.

She expressed her frustration over the labeling of her class as Early Intervention Program (EIP).

> My entire class had a label. I mean, they were supposed to be labeled as the EIP class, and that in itself, to label a child EIP was frustrating me from the beginning, because it wasn't their fault. I know that EIP just means early intervention, but we are still in a place in society that requires paperwork, and labeling, and things that are going to follow them in their file forever, and it absolutely is not their fault that they were in this position, so… Yeah. That's very important to me to kind of get them out of – because I mean, even when they grow up and they see that, it's going to be like, "Oh, wow. Is there something wrong with me? Why was I in this class? Why did I have this in my folder?" Going to college, like, they're going to have [these records].

The Response to Intervention (RTI) process, a series of leveled supports designed to determine students' potential need for special education testing, was another area in which Michelle applied her pedagogical knowledge, research, and reflection skills to protect her students from labeling. She showed me some artifacts as examples and explained instances where she had intervened to correct the process when it was being incorrectly applied.

> It was frustrating to to start looking into their [students'] files and start seeing that they're being RTI'd for things like sight words, and I'm just like, "Why in the world would they be RTI'd for sight words when it's very clear that they don't know their letter sounds?" Now, obviously, there's an issue, but I'm not looking at it like, "Oh, this child doesn't know letters!" It's like, "I need to help this child learn his letters, because he's never going to know sight words, and who cares if he doesn't know his sight words if he doesn't know his letters? He's never going to be able to read anything."

Michelle explained that by adjusting RTI goals and focusing on the foundational skills that her students lacked, her students were able to make dramatic progress. In follow-up RTI meetings, she recalled the reactions of the RTI team,

> The psychologist and the counselor were both very shocked that I said he had mastered, at that point, half of his letter sounds. And they were like, "He spent an entire year last year and only knew the letter A." It was almost as if they were questioning whether or not he had really learned these sounds.

There were other occasions when Michelle made the decision not to place a student in RTI. She explained her thought process and careful consideration of each student's situation,

> I know that records follow kids through school, and I don't want to RTI [unnecessarily]. For instance, I have ESOL students who came in mid-year. They're really, really behind, but I don't think there's anything wrong where they need to be RTI'd. They don't have the language there, so I'm taking them through the exact same process, and I'm seeing growth. So, my question was, "I don't want to tier-three them right now, and they're like, 'Yeah, that's fine. Just keep all of their tier-two data.'" Because I just don't want their records to be like, "Oh, there's something wrong with these children," when I don't think that there is. Some people don't agree with me on that, but I just – I don't know. Again, since my brother was a product of that record, I don't want to do that to other kids if I feel like it can kind of be addressed.

Michelle shared another example that demonstrated her work guiding the RTI process,

> In the beginning there would be lines for the word, but now that he is at a point where he can actually do sentences, we'll draw the lines for the sentence. But he did this by himself– I was just really proud of it, but some teachers would come in and be like, "Wow. That's all he wrote for second grade?" But this is where he is right now, and the same thing happened last year. I had a kid who came in with no English language at all, and he left writing more like this. And for some teachers, they would be like, "Well, it's not spelled correctly. It's not written correctly." But I'm just like, "Do you know where he came from not being able to write?" And this is what it's supposed to look like in second grade. I've done that research too. I don't have them memorized, but I know what it looks like for their writing developmentally.

Managing the process of RTI with a critical eye for unnecessary and incorrect labels was one way that Michelle advocated for her students using her pedagogical knowledge and skills.

Michelle also used her knowledge of culturally relevant pedagogy to support her students' learning by building on their personal lives and experiences. She made an effort to know her students' families and used details of her students' lives during instruction. During my classroom observation I noted that she recognized and mentioned siblings of her students who appeared on the morning announcements, and she had relationships with many families who attended the 5K school fundraiser that I observed. Michelle made other connections by bringing

up places in the neighborhood and noting that her home was like the apartments where they lived. Michelle also used Spanish words as commands occasionally during the school day and allowed students to speak to each other in Spanish as they worked in their cooperative groups. When discussing the concept of a garden nursery from the book *Wangari's Trees*, Michelle asked if any of the students had a baby in the family, to help explain the vocabulary word, nursery.

High expectations. Michelle protected her students from negative labels by maintaining an attitude of high expectations for their work and abilities. By carefully guarding instructional time, demanding quality work from her students, and insisting that each student learn grade-level content even if their reading level was well below grade level, Michelle was making a statement to her students and to her colleagues that her class was capable of learning and of producing quality work.

In a focus group discussion about the impact of standardized testing on scheduling and instruction, Michelle explained to her fellow participants,

> Testing has been an absolute nightmare, obviously for the upper grades. I'm sure you guys hate it, but those of us who are just waiting for everyone to finish, it is absolutely the longest day. Luckily we're outside [in a modular unit], but you know we're not supposed to go into the building, all the specials, because our school is so small, all of those rooms are being used for small group testing. Last year during this time, I was put into another classroom so we actually had two second-grade classrooms outside in one trailer together. They take me out of my classroom and put me into another, so you have 60 kids sitting in a trailer – as you're trying to conduct – like I will put my kids in a circle on the carpet and try to carry on as much as I can with somewhat meaningful activities, even though other people are just doing worksheets.

Michelle was already planning for adjustments she would make the following year during standardized testing to protect her students' instructional time from the interruptions and logistical distractions. She stated,

> I tried to kind of stick to the subjects that we were supposed to be doing and some sort of outline, but next year I'm just going to do more project-based activities, and who cares if I'm doing math at the end of the day.

Guarding instructional time for her students was one subtle way that Michelle demonstrated her belief in her students' potential, but she was very direct as she communicated her expectations for their work and for their behavior to them during the school day. Outside of the classroom, Michelle was very direct with her students regarding her expectations for their behavior, and her implication was that her class was capable. She framed a correction of the class by saying, "This is not the class that I know knows how to behave."

I also observed Michelle communicating her high expectations to individuals and to the class collectively about completing homework and maintaining their reading logs. She announced to the class in the morning that because they were not meeting their reading goals, she would be checking reading logs every day. When a student arrived later in the morning and explained that the reading log was at home, she explained to the group, "The reading log needs to remain in your homework folder, and you need to write the title of the book two times." At the end of the day, she reviewed the process for completing the reading logs, and encouraged her students to keep up with them. "I will check them again tomorrow," she said. "There is no excuse."

Michelle also let her students know that she expected them to complete their assignments and homework and to complete it correctly. When at student told her that he did not have his homework, and that he would turn it in the next day, she stated simply, "It is due today." She followed up with a quiet conversation to determine if there was a parent at home who spoke English. She explained,

> I typically respond in this manner to remind students that their homework is important. However, I'm also aware that they may have needed help and

> oftentimes, because of the language difference, parents can't help. My next question is typically, "Were your parents at home? Older brother or sister?" I try to help them problem-solve, so they can turn in their work next time.

While working with a student individually on mathematics classwork that was completed incorrectly, Michelle demonstrated the use of a place-value chart and observed the student then use the chart correctly to work the problem. She emphasized the necessity of using the chart, and then said calmly in a friendly tone, "I'm going to be very upset with you if you keep turning this in incorrectly."

In addition to directly communicating her high expectations to her students, Michelle fostered an atmosphere of learning that existed independently from reading ability. She explained,

> My class last year was so different from my class this year, but I still have the same expectations for them. I don't think just because their reading levels [are below grade-level] – I mean, I have six kids in this class that still can't read. They're still working on letter sounds, but I still use the same [academic] language with them. I have to maybe explain every single sentence that I say, but I don't think that I should withhold that information from them just because they can't read it themselves. So, I explain more.

Michelle elaborated on ways that she scaffolds the content for her struggling readers,

> I have countless books up here that you can see. They have a stack of books over there, I mean, again, they're above their level, but we read them out loud in the class, or they can take them to their seat. They'll look at the pictures, and they can ask questions about them, so just kind of making sure that they have extra resources.

The content-area supports that Michelle provided for her struggling readers supported their learning of the concepts and their ability to participate in the learning community of her classroom.

By incorporating high-level thinking into instructional conversations, Michelle gave all of her students' opportunities for building connections to concepts and vocabulary. During

classroom observations I noted cross-curricular connections that Michelle made linking content-area vocabulary from math, science, and reading to read alouds the class had heard earlier in the year: *Because of Winn Dixie* and *Wangari's Trees*. She also engaged the students in making social justice connections to the story of Wangari who stood against environmental destruction despite suffering violence and imprisonment. In response to the text one student commented, "Right is right even if you are alone." "Good observation," said Michelle. Expecting high-quality work and participation communicated Michelle's beliefs to her students that they were capable of excellent work and that their voices mattered to the class.

Guarding their futures. Even as Michelle was struggling with the diverse and critical needs of her second-grade students, she was contemplating their successes in the near future as well as into their adult lives. Having taught social and interpersonal skills as a counselor, Michelle understood the importance of those skills for her students' futures. "I have a vision of what I want these kids to grow up as," she said, "and it doesn't just happen. Someone has to tell them." She taught with a perspective of anticipatory advocacy toward academic as well as life skills with the intention of protecting them from negative labels they might face in their futures.

She expressed concern about the fact that her students would participate in the state-mandated standardized tests the following year, and she was planning for ways to prepare them. "You are not helping if you don't prepare them," she agreed as she discussed test preparation during a focus-group interview. "Even as a second-grade teacher I feel like that too." She elaborated,

> I don't do Milestones, but I understand the format. I have some ideas of things I will do next year. I hate to say that I have to prepare a kid for a test, but you're not helping them if you don't prepare them. So, there are just things that I can see that I could do differently that I could really just start to help them, so that they don't go to third grade and then all of a sudden it's like I know I've got to prepare for this test.

Michelle had reflected on the merits of the state-mandated test, and she had determined that the writing and responding focus could be useful in her work with her second graders and was actually much better than the "fluffy piece" second graders often wrote. She planned to adjust her writing topics to reflect the type of writing her students would need to engage in as third graders.

Michelle also knew that behavioral expectations would be stricter as her students moved on to higher grades, and she took time to discuss and prepare her students for that change. She addressed personal boundaries, a concept that can be elusive for younger students, in the following manner,

> We recently had to start talking about personal boundaries. "You can't go over to my desk and start flipping through." I told my husband last night that I call it our classroom but this class took that too literally. Last year, it was like, "Where the desks are, that's our classroom, but this year, the entire classroom is our classroom. It doesn't matter." [Laughs] So, having those conversations too. Today I was like, "You know your third-grade teachers are probably going to be very mad at you when you go up to her desks and start flipping through her things." So, the relationships, conversations, I mean, they don't know. Someone has to teach them. It's just part of this job.

In addition to preparing her students academically and behaviorally, Michelle took time to teach life skills such as teamwork and communication that she knew from her own experiences working with her grade-level team were challenging but necessary. In her UACM program interview Michelle had discussed the importance of effective teamwork and declared her intention to model this skill for her students. Working with her colleagues had proven to be a challenge to her own collaboration skills, so she was able to empathize with the difficulties her students had at times. She explained,

> The way the world is going, you're going to have to learn to work on a team. I mean I do it every day. Do I like it every day? No. On one activity, we actually had to have a conversation. Students kept crying, saying, "I don't like this! They're not

> listening to me!" And I had just had a staff meeting that day where someone was like, "You don't listen!" "You don't listen!" and I actually sat them [students] down, and I was thinking, "I feel like I should tell my coworkers this." I told them "People aren't always going to like what you have to say, but that doesn't mean you always have to keep your mouth shut." Absolutely not, and can you say, "Well, I like what you're saying, but I don't agree with this. I agree with you on this point, but I don't agree with you on this point." So that's what I try to instill in them, that it's okay to say something, that it's okay to speak up, but you also can't expect your opinion to be the only one that matters, because you have everyone else at your group as well.

Teamwork and communication were important life skills that Michelle fostered in her second-grade classroom. "I mean even with next year, third grade is harder," she said. "They're going to have to do a lot more group work, so in the immediate future as well as when they go on and become adults in whatever they decide to do." Her previous work experience influenced her emphasis on life skills. She recalled,

> I used to work with teenagers, and I know a lot of them were lacking those skills, so I guess I could also think forward. What do they need to do when they're 16, 17, and 18? The kids I worked with before didn't have [those life skills] – which was a reason I came to elementary. I wanted to help them have those skills before they [grew up].

She also felt that when her students effectively worked together and communicated within the group that they were more likely to be able to fend off negative labels in the present and future. She explained,

> It definitely does help when they feel like they're involved in the classroom too. I do have some behavioral issues, but I feel like the students feeling like they're a part of the classroom, I feel like it helps them to feel like, "Hey, we're all working together for a common goal for us all to move forward, and I need to do my part." So, yeah, I think it teaches them teamwork. It teaches them that their opinions are valuable, that their thoughts are important. It helps them practice.

Michelle also considered skills in teamwork and communication as integral to development of healthy self-esteem in young adults and she recalled the troubled young adults with whom she had worked previously. "A lot of times they were in trouble too, because their self-esteem was

really low," she explained. "They had pretty much been told by their teachers or their parents, what they thought didn't really matter." By "having them be more involved and taking ownership of what we're doing in the classroom," Michelle guarded her students futures from negative labels by giving them skills for successful interactions in school and as within society.

Summary – Theme Two: Advocating by Protecting Students from Labels

Michelle protected her students from negative labels by critically examining and sometimes refusing to accept labels that had previously been given to her students. She managed her students' behavior and academic supports and held her expectations high to challenge and often defy negative assumptions about her students. Her attitude of high expectations also communicated to her students that she felt that they were capable of excellence, and the ways that she guarded their futures by preparing them with academic knowledge and life skills were examples of anticipatory advocacy.

Resisting. Even during her admission interview for the UACM program Michelle had acknowledged the power of teachers' beliefs about their students' abilities to influence student achievement. She discussed the "dynamics of teachers in classrooms and schools," and noted that their negative assumptions and attitudes could "push students to the side." Michelle explained during one of our conversations her feeling that while some educators at her school thought that they were teaching in culturally relevant ways, she doubted not only their ability to teach in culturally relevant ways, but also their understanding of the meaning of cultural relevance. She explained that she had read widely on the subject of cultural relevance, and this gave her the knowledge to be critical of assumptions some teachers make about students.

Because Michelle felt confident in her ability as a culturally relevant teacher, she resisted situations that had the potential to expose her students to negative assumptions. She relied on

empathy and knowledge of appropriate classroom management and pedagogical approaches to tell her when it was right to refuse to participate in activities that were assumed within her school. She described the pressure to participate in the faculty kick-ball game on field day and her response, **"**A lot of other people were just surprised and they were like, 'You should go out,' and when you open the door and you see a big cloud of brown dust, and it's a million degrees, I'm like, 'I think we'll just stay inside.'" At times Michelle also refused to place students in the RTI process when she felt that they could make progress adequately with out the RTI label. "This was one who everyone told me to RTI," she stated. "I did not, because I felt that he was making grand progress."

Michelle also resisted mandates that she determined counterproductive by expressing her disagreement and, occasionally, by saying, "I don't care," and going ahead with actions she felt were appropriate. One scenario that Michelle criticized with her colleagues involved standardized testing procedures. "Once you finish your testing booklet, you just have to close it, and set your head down," she stated. "So, if you finish and there's still like, say, 30 minutes left, 45 minutes left, you're just sitting in there doing nothing. 'Put your head down.' It's insane." She empathized,

> Just think about if you really have to go to the bathroom, and you have a whole hour or two of the test left. How are you supposed to concentrate on what you're doing? That's insane. I probably would have just walked out. Maybe not in elementary school, but definitely later I would have had to walk out. The kids weren't the ones cheating so why were they being penalized for it?

Michelle resisted what she saw as a waste of her students' instructional time by planning to incorporate project-based assignments during periods of standardized testing despite the fact that this approach could conflict with district-mandated curriculum maps. "Next year I'm just going

to do more project-based activities, and who cares if I'm doing math at the end of the day," she said to her peers. "Like I just, I don't really care."

Classroom awards became a source of conflict for Michelle when the school administrators attempted to standardize the process among classrooms. Michelle explained the situation,

> We received an email today saying we can no longer give special awards on honors day. We can only give the ones that are specified by the school, but that's something I will not listen to. If I want to give an award to students in my class, because they met a goal, or they did well, then I will do that. Bottom line, I don't care.

Michelle's confidence in her abilities as a culturally-responsive teacher drove her to resist negative labels and situations that had the potential to jeopardize her students' successes.

Sustaining. Michelle resisted negative labels by remaining critical and refusing to participate in activities she deemed harmful to her students, and conversely, insisting on practices that she felt were beneficial for them. To sustain her proactive and often oppositional position, Michelle relied on her own self-confidence in her abilities as a teacher, her students' observable and dramatic progress, and supportive cues she drew from administrators and colleagues.

Michelle felt confident in her own knowledge of developmentally appropriate and culturally relevant approaches. She had resisted certain applications of the RTI process, and gone her own direction to support struggling readers in her class. Michelle's self-confidence in her skills also worked to sustain her positive approach to extremely stressful and complicated challenges. She explained her perspective,

> But my goal is to think about what I want my end result to be, and for all these kids, it's a challenge. To me, it's a personal challenge. I'm going to do what I can so that they succeed. It sounds so cliché, but – [Laughs], that is really how I think about this job now.

Michelle's confidence and positive approach were strengthened when her students' successes challenged negative labels and assumptions. She recalled, "My class was that class where everyone had seen them crawl around on the floor under the desks, and now they [colleagues] walk by, and they are like, 'Whoa, those kids aren't getting in trouble." "People will come up and say, 'Your class is the best!'" she added. "I can't believe this is the same classroom as last year!" Administrators also expressed surprise at the progress of Michelle's students. She recalled, "I mean, an administrator will come in and be like, 'Wow. I can't even believe this is the same class from last year. I look at some of your kids, and they're having those conversations. I'm always just surprised.' She continued, "So, just to have people come up and be like, 'Those kids, really? They are doing this now?' It's really exciting."

The parents of Michelle's students also noticed their children's progress, and their encouragement was also significant to her. She recalled,

> It was so rewarding on the last family night for a mom to come up and say, "My child who came into second grade not knowing any letter sounds, any numbers--." She was like, "He learned more from you than he has in his past two years of school." So, just to hear something like that, it just makes it worth it.

Michelle looked forward to finishing the year and presenting a comprehensive report of her students' growth to support her resistance to negative labels. She stated, "At the end of the year I really want to present the administration with this information. Like, 'Look how much these kids grew. This is what I did.'"

Besides drawing encouragement from the reactions of peers to her students' progress, Michelle noticed occasions when her colleagues followed her example and made their own decisions about the best thing for their students. When Michelle refused to make her class sit out

in the heat to watch her play kick-ball on Field Day, she noted, “Another second-grade teacher saw that I did that, so she felt like she could then make that decision for her class too.”

The administrators at Michelle’s school exhibited confidence in her ability to effectively teach students with challenging needs, and they allowed her a level of freedom in her approaches to that work. In this way, the school administration was instrumental in helping Michelle to sustain her efforts in fighting labels. “Because there are so many kids [who are struggling in her class], no one's breathing down my back,” Michelle explained. She also considered it a complement when new students with documented learning and behavior difficulties were placed in her class. She said, “But my administrator said, quote, "I've seen what you've done with the other kids, so I decided to put this student in your class." Administrative support along with signs of peer and student success encouraged Michelle to continue her work defying negative labels.

Theme Three: Advocating by Fostering Lifelong Learning

Michelle envisioned and enacted her work as a teacher giving an “all-encompassing” commitment to the work, including caring deeply about and resisting negative labels that might be associated with her students and the possible effects on her students’ lives even into the future. In addition to the protective nature of her advocacy against negative labeling, Michelle cultivated an atmosphere conducive to creating lifelong learners. She modeled her own love of learning, and insisted on using ambitious teaching practices, activities that not only addressed the curriculum standards, but also made experiences with authentic problem solving resulting in deep thinking and intellectual dialogue (Lampert, Boerst, & Graziani, 2011; Windschitl, Thompson, & Braaten, 2011), the norm in her classroom. For Michelle, creating lifelong learners was a logical progression from her work in challenging and defying labels and an important

factor for her students' immediate and future success. This aspect of her vision was evident in her thinking prior to entering the UACM program. In her admission interview essay, she wrote,

> I believe that when a student is presented with the idea that there is a lot to explore in the world, the student may develop a desire to learn more, could decide to complete school possibly even go to college. By opening a child's imagination you give that child the tool to be curious about change, and you give him the strength to not settle.

She went on to explain her belief that by "allowing the student to have fun while he is learning, a teacher can overcome the obstacle of a lesson potentially being boring which could hinder the student's ability to focus." "The desire to learn and explore can lead students to success," she added.

Ambitious teaching practices accomplished Michelle's goals to foster a love of learning among her students and to give them experiences with authentic problem solving, deep thinking, and intellectual dialogue, all experiences that she felt were vital to their immediate and future success.

Love of learning. Michelle's passion for teaching her students to love learning remained a clear priority in her vision for advocating for her students' future success. In a conversation with her peers, Michelle responded to a quote from Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, "If you want to build a ship, don't drum up people to gather wood, give orders, and divide the work. Instead teach them to yearn for the vast and endless sea." She stated,

> I feel like that kind of sums up my philosophy and what I'm hearing from everyone else too. You can hand out knowledge, but unless you make a person interested in what they're learning, there's no value in it. You have to make them want to do more for themselves, or teach them that they can do more. Inspire them; make them excited for what the world has to offer. Create a love of learning.

As I observed Michelle teaching her students, I noted on several occasions that she modeled a love of learning by positioning herself as a co-learner, taking students' suggestions and admitting

that there was more to learn. She referred to herself as one of the class when she decided that she needed to reteach a concept, saying, “A lot of us are getting it [the word sort] wrong.” She called the class from their desk groups to the carpet at the front of the classroom to go over the activity. Another example occurred during a science activity when a student asked how much water she was going to pour behind a model of a dam for the test, Michelle corrected herself for leaving out a useful step in the process. She smiled and said, “I should have measured and recorded that. We will record it on the board.” Later, she added a new measure to the test, in order to see how much water the dam would hold. “When you have good ideas,” she said, “You get to do more stuff.” Finally, when students questioned the possibility of water turning rocks in a dam into mud, she said, “We will have to read some more about that.”

Ambitious teaching practices. Michelle also fostered an appreciation for learning in her classroom through enthusiastic participation in ambitious teaching practices that included authentic problem solving, deep thinking, and intelligent dialogue.

Authentic problem solving. I observed one engineering, design-build lesson where students worked in teams to design and then construct dams out of a variety of materials including dirt, straws, paper, and toothpicks. Each group constructed their dam in a shallow container with the intention of testing the dams one-by-one in front of the class to see how efficient they were at holding back water.

This science activity took place during an Engineer-for-a-Day (EFAD) program, a monthly school-wide activity where students at all grade levels in the school engaged in an engineering design challenge organized around a theme. The challenge took place during the course of an entire school day, and it included an emphasis on authentic problem solving and teamwork. Michelle was committed to the philosophy behind the EFAD activities, and she spent

a significant amount of time researching and planning the activities. She explained why she chose an EFAD activity for one of her advocacy observations and how the activities fit into her vision for advocacy for her students,

> I feel like wealthier kids from more prominent families who have better resources, they usually come into school with more knowledge and experiences that help them become more successful later in life. Our kids, whether it be their parents don't have the money, they're working, whatever the reason, different situations, they don't have the same educational toys, or they don't all have the same educational toys. They don't all have the same kind of time to sit down and be a child and just explore and build things, so I feel like it's really important, because it helps the child-development process they need to go through. It helps even adults just to be able to sit down and figure something out. It teaches problem-solving skills, and a lot of our kids don't have those things, and they're not able, again, it's no one's fault that they don't have them, but I feel like as a teacher, that's one of the things I wanted to offer them

She continued,

> I've had the experience of working with wealthier kids too, and you see all the time that they're given to just sit there, and they don't have chores. They don't have anything like that, and these kids are totally different. They have things they have to do at home. Some of them have to take care of their entire families, and they don't have time to just be children. I think it's really important for them too, even if it is something [like] building a dam. Obviously, most of them probably aren't going to grow up and really build a dam, but it does teach them—"Here's a problem. I need to figure out how to solve it. How can I use the resources I have to solve the problem that I have?" Whether it be – you know, "I don't have paper for my homework," and it just helps with problem solving.

Michelle described an active classroom and included it as part of her vision for her work during our first conversation. She explained,

> My favorite subject is science, so I like to see students arguing their opinions and beliefs and following that up with information that they've gotten from books or research that we've done. So, just to have a classroom that is working together, and it's not like the kids just need a desk, like listening to me say things. I want them up and moving around, and talking about what they're learning about, and things like that.

In fact, during observations in Michelle's classroom I noted that her students were rarely sitting at their desks with only paper and pencil in front of them. The students' desks were arranged in

groups of four and five, and they frequently talked quietly as they worked with materials to complete assignments. For example, Michelle gave each student seven square cheese crackers to use during a math lesson as she reviewed the meanings of the words: *row* and *column*. Students arranged the crackers in the appropriate shape according to Michelle's directions, and then she introduced the word *partition* and concept of *partioning*. The students moved into groups with each group working on a different activity, but all of them used square manipulatives to complete their tasks. Some students stood at their desk, and many were talking quietly and engaging together in using the manipulatives. This scene was consistent with Michelle's vision for her classroom,

> Doing experiments, like in science, but even like working out a math problem and having that discussion. One child does this; another one does this, and they see that, and they're comparing their strategies. Which one? Obviously, one answer may be correct. One may not be, but just having them kind of figure out, "Oh, I made this mistake, and you did it like this. Is this a better choice?" I see that in my classroom every day, which is really exciting.

The EFAD design-build challenge activity also included the use of manipulatives, but the heavy emphasis on teamwork added an additional level of activity and interpersonal complexity to the lesson. Michelle introduced the dam building project and gave the students a few minutes to brainstorm their ideas for building a dam and to draw a design. She explained and posted vocabulary words to help them label their drawings, and then talked through the materials that each group had available for the build. Michelle set the timer and circulated between the groups, reminding the students to write the steps for their building process as they work, and walking some students back through their steps to help them complete the writing. "Will this stop a flood?" she said. "Think about what you can do to stop a flood. Everyone needs to be up out of their seat working on the design."

Recalling that particular activity and active learning in general, Michelle conceded, “It definitely can be a lot harder [to teach this way].” She stated,

> It definitely can be extremely stressful and extremely draining when you're constantly having to navigate people's interpersonal conflict, but again, they need to learn those skills to be successful. A lot of teachers just want the students to be in their desks doing something by themselves. It definitely is a lot more work when you have kids up. I think that is one of the reasons why people don't like it. You go home on those days and even though you don't have to plan an entire day's worth of different lesson plans, those days you can be a lot more tired and feel a lot more drained. So, yes, I think that's probably one thing, one reason why they don't like it. The activities can be really messy, so on top of that, you're cleaning up, so –there are multiple reasons why they don't like them.

Despite the fact that some teachers did not like the emphasis on active learning, it was fully expected that every teacher at the school would participate in the EFAD activities each month. When I observed the dam building activity, the students had engaged in EFAD nine times that year already, and Michelle explained that the process was a typical event in her classroom and that her students knew the process. She stated,

> These are things we do in the classroom as well. They've drawn and labeled. So, it's not something that we've even just done those nine times, it's something that we do [regularly]. And I mean, it can be a bit tedious sometimes, but the reason I'm kind of a stickler for that, and I tell them—[When] they grow up and become engineers, engineers do have a process. You have to ask yourself what exactly you're going to do. Sometimes you give out the materials, and the kids just want to start building, but the point is they're supposed to be solving a problem. Before you can solve it, you need to know what it is you're actually doing, and then you need to look at what you have and make sure that you're not wasting materials.

Michelle insisted that each student participate in each step of the process, coaxing along a few students who were resistant to completing the writing portion of the design. Coaching the teams to work together efficiently was another priority for Michelle as she circulated through the groups. “Students write about how the group worked or did not work well together,” she explained. She prompted one group by saying,

> I am concerned that you are not going to meet your goal. You have lots of ideas, but you have nothing to show for your work. Three different people are building three different designs.

Michelle explained her expectations for her students' participation in the activity, saying,

> When they came into my classroom, it would have been really difficult and for many of them, they couldn't have done that at all. Because this was one of our last builds, we've been working on it for a year, and they know the process. They understand what they're supposed to do. Yes it still is hard for them, but my expectations for them are still that they've been doing it so many times that they know what they're supposed to do. They know how to do it. It's not like I just said here do it, and you're on your own. They've done it.

Authentic problem solving gave Michelle's students rich learning experiences, supporting them academically as well as socially as they worked in cooperative groups.

Deep thinking. In addition to insisting that each student participate in the mechanics of the engineering design process, Michelle pushed her students to think deeply about the task from start to finish.

> It's not so much the design brief that I'm really concerned about. It's them actually going through the steps, like understanding what it is they have to do, thinking about how can I solve this problem, and then designing and creating it and going back. The biggest thing that we always talk about is making sure, if it doesn't work, how could you have made it better? What can you do next time to make it better?

She explained the importance of the practice of deep thinking to her vision for her classroom,

> It's just like what I feel a classroom should look like, so for me it makes total sense. I mean, you go into some people's classrooms, and the kids are all just sitting there, and they're really quiet. Then the teacher will ask them a question, and they're confused as to why the students don't respond or why they don't have an answer, but they're never really given time to think. When I became a teacher that was really important for me.

Michelle felt that the skill of deep thinking transferred to other areas of life, and the ability to "make sense" when approaching any problem was a skill she wanted to foster in her students. She explained,

> I think it's a life skill that, I mean, some of the kids have it at home, some of them don't, and this could be for any – it's not just this demographic. It can be for any child, period, some times you don't have those life skills. So, my biggest thing with creating those designs is making sure that you think about your problem, and that what you're doing to solve the problem actually makes sense. It might not work, I don't care about that, but it needs to make sense.

Michelle rejected classrooms where teachers asked questions and students were expected to simply produce correct responses. She explained,

> It's not just a skill I want them to have for now. Whenever I thought about how I wanted my classroom to look, I really thought about their futures. I know kids sometimes have a problem vocalizing their thoughts, and I know that sometimes they can sit in a classroom and just feel like their opinions aren't useful or even aren't wanted. And I've read a lot of books that talk about how the teacher can give the right answer all day long, but the kids need to go through that thought process themselves. They have to be able to come it themselves before they're just going to take what the teacher says at face value.

Michelle demanded that her students not give up thinking about the solution to the problem just because their models had been successful. “Just because a model worked,” she told them, “doesn’t mean it couldn’t work even better.” Deep thinking was a habit of mind that Michelle fostered in her students as lifelong learners.

Intellectual dialogue. In Michelle’s classroom deep thinking about solutions to authentic problems led to another aspect of ambitious teaching, and that was intellectual dialogue. Prior to entering the UACM program, Michelle had written about the importance of communication skills for students. She stated, “By having more effective communication skills the student will hopefully feel more eager to be active in class, thus making his education more of a success.” During my observations in Michelle’s classroom I noted several occasions when she directed the students who were supposed to be working cooperatively to talk to each other about their ideas and questions. For example, when one student asked her if a particular combination of letters was a word, she said, “I don’t know. Ask your group.” Later, when students were sharing their

word charts in whole group, Michelle said, “Someone talk to [student name] about why this is a word or not a word. Does someone agree or disagree, and do you have a reason why?”

Supporting an argument with facts was a second-grade standard that Michelle was working on with her students as they wrote persuasive paragraphs. As she circulated between the groups she said to several students, “You have done a good job giving me your thoughts, but you haven’t given me your opinion.” She went on to explain how to express an opinion based on facts. She explained why she stressed this skill in her classroom,

> I mean that's a big thing. Second graders are supposed to learn how to support their opinions with details or information. Through my studies at Georgia State and working with other professors, I've been informed, and I can see where a lot of times the ESOL students have trouble vocalizing their opinions or their thoughts, period. So, I feel like just having them start earlier is obviously better. Having them talk about what they're doing or talk about what they think about it-- it not only helps expand their thoughts and their perspectives, but it also gives them that practice that they need, so as they get older they can continue to formulate their thoughts and vocalize them.

The EFAD engineering design challenge was a rich opportunity for Michelle to reinforce intellectual dialogue among her students. As she moved around the groups, she reminded everyone that they all needed to work on the design as a team and talk to each other. She said several times, “Stop telling me! Talk to each other!” Michelle explained,

> You need to be able – and for ESL kids too, they need to be able to explain what they've done. So, we've spend a lot of time talking about that, going around in groups having them communicating, “Why did you put this here? Why did you do that?” just to give them a chance to vocalize their thoughts.

The group presentations of the completed projects provided additional opportunities for Michelle’s students to engage in intellectual dialog, and Michelle intentionally prepared her students to critique and to answer questions from their peers. “We always say what we see good first,” she reminded them. “Don’t start yelling out what is wrong.” She explained her thoughts on this,

> I've been a supervisor for grownups in the past, and any time you have to reprimand someone you always say something positive before you go into the negative things. But yeah, they're seven- and eight-years-old. The first thing they're going to notice are the things that they could have done better or someone copied me. It's not always horrible, bad things, but it is something that we talk about a lot. Say something nice and – but it also has gone so far the other direction where they only thing they say is, "I like when you do this, I like when you do that." So I've kind of modeled – It's okay to say maybe you could have added a little bit more here, because that's just, you know, it's supporting people –

Commenting on the full-day classroom observation, Michelle told me that she felt good about the day because of the conversations she was having during whole group time on the carpet at the front of her room. She recalled,

> I feel like they were really involved in our conversations on the carpet today. I was able to see even stuff we talked about yesterday that we had just briefly mentioned, and even things we talked about his morning, how they're kind of starting to remember that and to bring it up in later subjects.

Intellectual dialogue, deep thinking, and authentic problem solving were elements of ambitious teaching practices that Michelle incorporated into her lessons with the intention of grooming her students to be lifelong learners.

Resisting. Michelle was committed to developing in her students the desire and ability to be lifelong learners, and she pursued this goal by fueling their love for learning by her own modeling and by providing rich and varied instructional experiences. She also relied on ambitious pedagogies to give her students opportunities to engage in authentic problem solving, deep thinking, and intellectual dialogue. Her approach to learning emerged from the question she continued to ask herself about her work for her students, "What more can I do?" Michelle expressed a lack of understanding and a level of frustration with colleagues who failed to see the importance of providing instructional experiences that promoted lifelong learning. She explained how she resisted the potential to be discouraged,

> I've addressed those frustrations in grade-level meetings and in conversations with other people, but I do have to remind myself that I can't really change other people. I can lead by example. I can do what I can do for my classroom. I can share my advice. Everyone's not always willing to listen, but even though I'm a really shy person, once I figure out that something is kind of working, I'm not scared to relate that to other people. So, I try to do that.

Michelle's pragmatic attitude toward colleagues with different perspectives also bolstered her resolve as she worked with challenging students and classes to implement strategies that required repetition and consistency before they began to make a difference. While she admitted that the learning experiences she provided could be messy and tiring for her personally, she reminded herself to be realistic about her students' age and backgrounds, saying,

> I mean ideally they would already be working perfectly together just like another school year, but realistically that's not going to happen. So, just to see how much they've grown to this point, compared to the beginning of the year.

Finally, when it came to resisting the urge to give up on ambitious teaching for quieter and more traditional instructional practices, Michelle remarked that her strength to resist complacency emerged from a much deeper source. She explained,

> I guess for me it comes from that initial commitment, that I'm there to make sure that these kids grow. I don't look at the child as having a deficit, but I feel like when they grow up, sometimes the world has this deficit view of the populations we work with, and I really want to prepare them to overcome that. So, whatever method or means I need to use to help them achieve the best possible outcome for themselves, then I'm going to do that.

Michelle's pragmatic perspective to her colleagues' differing expectations for their work and to her students' development enabled Michelle to resist discouragement in her own work.

Sustaining. A realistic perspective and a firm grasp on her commitment to children enabled Michelle to resist what she considered mediocrity and complacency among her peers, and she sustained the ongoing effort by her students' positive responses and the structure

provided by her responsive classroom management practices and school support staff. She described her students' reaction to the engineering design build, stating,

> The STEM activity, or the EFAD activity, we do those things here, but it is something different that a lot of schools don't do. I hear complaints every day from other teachers about how they hate doing it, but it's something that I actually do enjoy. That was one of my least favorite builds, but the kids did a really good job that day, so it even made me realize that some of the times when I may not think it's the best of activities, the kids may really enjoy them, and they did that day. So, I thought it was just a good thing again to show, just because it's fun for me. It's different; the kids don't get to do it at home. If they went to another school, they may not get to have those experiences.

Not only did Michelle's students enjoy the high-level thinking activities, but also she was encouraged by their grasp of grade-level content knowledge. She stated,

> It's good for them because my class last year was more on grade level, and I use a lot of the same activities, but my class last year I was able to see the growth more quickly. For this class they all came in basically on kindergarten level, so to hear the words that they're using– And of course they do struggle a little bit more putting them into correct sentences, but that's understandable as well, but the fact that I do have kids that came in so far below grade level to still understand the concepts that they are supposed to be understanding. I'm pretty proud of them for that.

Michelle acknowledged that the extra support she got for her class, daily segments of ESOL, EIP, and math support, helped her to handle the large number of struggling students while she still provided high-level thinking activities and experiences. Equally important in supporting her work was the structure provided by her classroom management practices. She explained the importance of classroom management to the success of ambitious teaching practices,

> The management does take a lot of practice. At the beginning of the year we practiced it a lot, but I can't do the types of lessons that I want to do if I don't have that, so that's very important to me too. I'm pretty organized, and I like things to be routine. Because there are so many other things we want to do, and I understand that you have to have that organization to be able to do the fun things, and I try to instill that in them as well. So, when we see other classes acting like crazy people, they know to step aside and let the craziness go on.

Conversely, Michelle noted that ambitious teaching practices also positively influenced her students' behavior. She explained,

> We have less behavioral issues. We aren't constantly sitting in our seats, and we are doing things that are fun. In all honesty, I do it for the kids, but it's also for me too. It would be really boring to have to sit everyday. It's boring when the classroom is quiet, and I'm just sitting here, and they are doing something at their seats. I mean it makes your day go by really slowly. I enjoy seeing them get so excited about the activities which is why I spend so much time planning them, but I also feel like, because the activities that we do are more engaging, that it helps with those issues. Because we are always doing something, they aren't getting in trouble. I'm not always sending kids to the office, because they never really have a chance. On a normal day, we are pretty busy.

Sustaining her commitment to advocacy through the development of lifelong learners was possible for Michelle, because she focused on positive student responses and support from her school administrators, and implemented responsive classroom management strategies to support her students' success.

Conclusion

Michelle envisioned her work as a teacher advocate as an "all-encompassing" commitment that included protecting her students from negative labels while she built them up as lifelong learners. She credited her personal experiences for her solid beliefs about the potentially long-lasting impact of teachers who dedicate themselves to protecting and nurturing the students in their classrooms. She reflected on her own childhood educational experiences,

> I feel like maybe my kids aren't being abused at home. Maybe they are, I don't know. That's a problem that teachers don't always know. But, I can see how it can be. They can follow the path I took, or they can follow the path that my brother took, and I feel like if he had had teachers who actually encouraged him to do better than he did, then maybe he wouldn't be doing what he's doing now. He's 28 now. I know there is a time when you do have to start making decisions for yourself, but I believe if he had had someone early, someone helping him understand that he did have worth, and that he did have value, and that he was smart, and that he could grow up and do something-- that he didn't have to follow in the footsteps of his family. I think that would have been a little more helpful for him.

> So when my kids, I know some of them don't have a lot of money. I have kids who have to take their backpacks home full of food, but I want them to know that even though that's your family's situation now, it doesn't have to always be that way. You can grow up and you can maybe go to college. Whatever you want, you can do that. Like a lot of my kids this year, they've told me that their dads have been in jail. "Just because your dad is in jail doesn't mean that you have to go to jail, and just because he's been in jail doesn't mean he's the worst person in the world either," you know?

While Michelle's own experience was the foundation of her vision for her work as a teacher advocate, she acknowledged the role that her specialized teacher preparation program had in providing her with the extensive pedagogical knowledge and skills.she needed to accomplish her vision. Speaking of the impact of her specialized teacher preparation program on her vision for her work as a teacher, Michelle explained how a community of like-minded colleagues supports her work,

> I feel like it [UACM] just strengthened my understanding of my personal core values and beliefs. A lot of times when people think the way we do, wanting to be understanding towards other people, everyone doesn't think that way, and I've gotten a lot of crap in the past for that. So it was nice to build relationships with people who think similarly and to know that even if they're not in my room with me-- when I'm working with these kids, and I'm trying to express that they can make something of themselves-- even though I may not always hear that from other people in my life. It's nice to know that I have a group of people that feel the same. You feel that support even though they're not really there with you.

Although Michelle was not willing to claim that she was comfortable being recognized as an effective teacher for students in an urban high-need school, she thought of the future in positive terms. She stated,

> One of my coworkers told me the other day, 'Stop thinking about next year!" because I'm already doing that. I mean, as much as I could have done, I feel like I've done that, but will I change things next year, absolutely. So I'm happy. I feel like I've done a good job. They've done a really good job, but there are always things that could be done differently that will hopefully support my class even more next year.

More broadly, Michelle saw her work as a teacher as a work in progress.

> I'm working for change, but with every person in every time frame, the change that you need to work towards may be different. So once you start to feel comfortable, then you're probably not doing as much as what you need to be doing.

Michelle summed up our work together by explaining that although she might not have an opportunity to know exactly how her teaching might impact the futures of her second- grade students, she had confidence that her role was important in their lives. She stated,

> I think people, who are not in teaching, when they look at the things we do for our kids, they're like, 'Wow! They're going to remember you,' and I'm like, 'They may not– in fact, I don't care. The fact that they don't remember me, but they go on to effectively communicate or control their emotions or be a mathematician? Great. There might be a high-school teacher that gets credit for that, and that's wonderful. But I got them to high school.

Michelle's vision for her work as a teacher advocate was comprised of a total commitment to her students including a dedication to protecting them from labels and cultivating them as lifelong learners. She resisted negative and indifferent responses from colleagues by relying on her strong grasp of culturally responsive teaching practices and responsive classroom management to give her the confidence in her own decisions. Noticing and valuing positive shifts she observed in her colleagues' actions, positive support from school administrators, and, most of all, positive responses and improvements in her students encouraged her to sustain her work as a teacher advocate.

Lola

> *The parents that I grew up with are actually biologically my aunt and uncle. They adopted my sister and me. My sister, she was a crack baby, and that still affects her. I think their example helped me a lot to understand how important family is, and how family can be different in so many different ways. Like, to look at my family, you wouldn't know anything different, because my parents are such amazing people that there is no difference in their raising their biological children and us. Maybe this is why I sympathize so much with my babies that are in financial crisis or whatever, because it hits home. I'm one step away. It could have been me, you know, I could have been in that situation literally—literally.*
>
> *My dad grew up in Compton, but back then Compton was actually a premier neighborhood. By the time he graduated from high school, it had started getting rough. Like, I think it was '76 that he graduated, so at that time the gangs had sort of taken over, and the crack epidemic was on the rise. So, even up until I went to college he would take us back to visit his old neighborhood, and his big thing was to give us a sense of grounding and just to know that, "You are no better than anybody else. People are just people."*
>
> *Maybe it hit home more for me, because it was like a personal thing, right? I've always been old before my time, because this happened when I was five, so I was old enough to know what was going on, but still very young. So, I've always had a sense of awareness, I guess.*

Education and Background

"When I was younger, I used to want to be a lawyer, specifically a civil rights lawyer," said Lola, "but then I realized I wanted to have a work/life balance," she laughed. Lola, who self-identified as biracial African American and Mexican, was born in Saudi Arabia and raised the suburbs of a large metropolitan area on the west coast of the United States. She explained the impact of her upbringing on her awareness of the importance of race,

> My passion for urban communities comes from exposure to race relations at an early age. I grew up in a premier community in which I was one of an extremely small population of African Americans. As a result of certain experiences in this social setting, some positive and some negative, my sense of identity as an African-American woman became deeply entrenched.

Lola attended a large state university on the west coast where she majored in Africana studies with a minor in communication studies. “My degree in Africana Studies reshaped several beliefs that I held as an African-American woman,” she wrote in her application goals statement. “One of the most profound revelations that I experienced was that the struggle for civil rights is far from over; disparities in treatment have merely been shifted from race to socioeconomic status,” she wrote. Lola’s strong identification with the African-American experience fueled her desire to make her own way to self-sufficiency. “I helped pay for school by taking several jobs and internships,” she explained. Even though she worked three jobs at times, she struggled to survive financially. “The decision to essentially drop out of school was extremely difficult for me, because I have always prided myself on the ability to ‘figure things out,’” she stated. Eventually, Lola secured a full-time position with a national bank, and she was able to re-enroll in coursework. She explained the influence of her work in the business world on her personal development,

> Ultimately, I settled into the banking industry and honed my leadership skills, learned self-sufficiency, and acquired financial stability. In fact, it was as a supervisor and manager that I realized that I am patient and have a knack for training and development. Nothing pleases me more than the knowledge that several of my trainees have continued on to achieve great success in the industry.

As a customer-service manager, Lola was recognized for excellence in both customer service and sales numerous times over the course of her six-year banking career.

Journey to Teaching

Although Lola was successful and being promoted within her banking career, she had taken the job only as a means of supporting herself until she could finish her undergraduate degree. “When I finished my bachelor’s degree and was successfully established in management, I became increasingly unhappy,” she recalled. She was transferred to Atlanta, and not long after,

she quit her job to become a teaching assistant in a Montessori preschool. She explained the reason for the transition,

> During my undergraduate experience, I had little idea of what I was going to do to make a difference in people's lives; there were just too many choices. What I did not realize was that while I was searching for focus, I ignored my natural talents relating to education, not realizing that I had an inclination towards people and children in particular.

Lola found the UACM program while searching online for pathways to teaching certification. In her application goals statement, she explained why the program was a good fit for her,

> Georgia State University's Urban Accelerated Master's and Certification program is everything that I want and need in a graduate school. It focuses on young people in urban areas in need of teachers who have a genuine desire to give back to this particular demographic. I have a vested interest in learning how to deliver quality education to all young children, because my affinity with them stems from our mutual innate enthusiasm for learning.

Lola was especially drawn to urban elementary schools despite her awareness of negative perceptions of inner-city schools. She explained,

> I feel like working in an urban setting kind of has a negative connotation, especially for folks that possibly have worked other places. You know, you hear about the 'hood' and you hear about, you know, "Those kids are rough," or, "They just don't care. They're lazy," and all of that.

She continued,

> I totally believe that every student should have access to a quality education, which is why I believe in working in urban areas, because I see that there's such a deficit there in terms of the opportunities that they're given and really just how people perceive students in that area. And the perception is what bothers me the most. For me, it was just going in and getting my hands dirty and really just working with those students and loving on those students and giving them the opportunity to be great, because they are. So, that's just kind of how I feel about it. And just challenging them to be the best that they can be and to really instill that confidence and that desire to be lifelong learners and to challenge themselves throughout the rest of their lives, which is why I chose elementary school as well, because you get them younger. It's easier. But the older they are, you know, the older anyone is, the more set they are in their ways.

A fan of the arts, Lola brought with her to teaching a love for reading, languages, writing poetry, playing flute, and dancing/stepping, as well as a love for hands-on science and anything to do with history. She considered herself to be culturally diverse, and she felt that her background equipped her to bring differing worldviews together within her classroom, making her a good match for urban schools. Lola aspired to be a teacher, and even after two years in the classroom, she adamantly declared, "I have no desire to be an administrator."

School Context

Lola was a third-grade teacher completing her second year of teaching at a high-need urban school located in a high-need metropolitan-area district outside of Atlanta at the time this study was conducted. She described the diversity of her school,

> Because we have such a large refugee population at our school, oh my gosh, I don't even know how many languages are spoken there, and dialects. There are really at least 30, if I'm not mistaken, at one time. We have all of these different cultures that are there, but it's still a great space, and that's what I love about it – is that. Especially last year, I had literally nine different languages that were spoken in my classroom last year, but we still had an awesome time, and we made it work. We're a family.

Lola was teaching the Integrated special education (ISE) class for the second year in a row, a group that was especially challenging because of the high concentration and combination of learning and language differences. She expressed her frustration with the fact that although she had taught a similar class her first year of teaching, the current year seemed to be more difficult. "It's a career change," she said, "so I guess I didn't realize how much I was going to put into the career." Lola described one conversation about her struggle that she felt was enlightening,

> I had a moment during an interview with an administrator, and it was interesting. She was saying that because I had experienced success in my first year, I had set a new bar of expectations. I was like, "That's it! That's totally it." I've totally set the standard in terms of what my new standard of excellence is, and of course I always want to exceed that. So, I mean it just makes it harder, but it's doable. I

> feel, you know, like I should be getting better at this. I have more time in the game. So, it's like, "No, no. I should have this already."

Lola described her relationship with her school administration. "It's interesting because I've had lots of different administrators at this point," she noted. "I've only been there for two years, and I've had three different principals, one interim and two different AP's." She continued,

> I haven't even completed my second year, so it is a lot of transition. I'll say this. I'm fortunate that my principals have been pretty supportive, especially this last one. I kind of stayed at [school name], because I kind of liked where she was going with a lot of her visions.

Lola's also relied on support from her grade-level colleagues. "Yeah, third grade, we're very close," she said, "and we even had a new person on the team, and we let her know like, 'Listen, this is a team structure, we work together, otherwise we're not going to be successful.'" Lola described her interactions with her teammates,

> I'm finishing my second year, and there's lots of things I don't know, so I'm always asking, "Wait a minute. What about this, and what about that, and how are you doing this?" Sometimes it can be annoying for other people, but I don't mind. I'll ask a million questions until I get it. I'm just kind of stubborn like that.

Despite the support of her team and of her administrators, Lola was strongly considering transferring to another school at the end of the year, and she was interviewing for positions at other schools within and outside of her district.

Lola's classroom was located on a main corridor of the mid-century constructed school building, and it was typical of classrooms from that period. Windows on the back wall overlooked green space and a more recently constructed gymnasium, while the front wall had two wooden cabinets for teacher supplies and student belongings. A low cabinet with a counter was covered with stacks of textbooks, instructional materials, and library books with a Black History month theme that were propped upright to display the covers. Student desks were

arranged in groups of three and four, and there was a rug at the front of the room where the entire group gathered for class meetings and whole-group instruction.

The nearly 60-year-old school building where Lola taught was located within a densely populated apartment neighborhood situated along a major highway corridor that was known for its international flavor. Strip malls, parking lots, and apartment complexes dominated the area, and hundreds of ethnic businesses lined the route that accommodated the wide variety of immigrants who had settled in the area. The community in which Lola taught was unusual because of its unique history and the transformation that had begun during Lola's first year of teaching. The neighborhood was dominated by a nearly 50-year-old public housing project that had been built to house African-American residents who were forced out of their neighborhood located in a nearby town during the 1960s. The housing project had been the home of generations of residents, but it was slowly being bought out and demolished. Lola had researched the history of her school community, and she explained the tragedy of the circumstances,

> First of all, it's historic. That land was granted from an ex-slave. She had this land, and she made it like a big community thing. So, there are generations of people that have lived there. So, to tear it down and to kind of get rid of it, I was really hurt to hear about that.

The closing of the housing project directly impacted Lola's students and her first year of teaching. She explained how learning about the transition of the neighborhood helped her to understand her students' situations.

> Yeah, so that [researching] helped me to get to know what was going on, but I was already interested because I was devastated. I'm wondering about these parents, like, "Why are you moving at the end of the year? What are you doing? We're so close." You know? But they had no choice. They literally received that notice like in either December or January, and they had to be out by March or something, which, again, is at the end of a school year. It's devastating for a kid that has to move at the end of second semester. So, these kids were sad and kind of withdrawn. You know, there's a lot going on. It was awful, so I was really mad when I found out what was happening. And of course they're building townhomes

> or condos or something, so it's, you know, of course for monetary gain, but, again, not to the benefit of the people in that community. They were given vouchers to go elsewhere, but with what transportation? It was infuriating honestly.

Lola continued,

> And I was actually talking to a parent or an auntie a couple of weeks ago when I went to a game, and I was like, "Yeah, I was sad that I found out about them tearing [housing project name] down right when I had just gotten there." I didn't know about it until it was really too late. It was already done. Students were moving, and they were kicking people out basically. Because, I definitely would have tried to help in some kind of way.

During her second year of teaching Lola's school community was still experiencing difficulty from the impact of the transition as students' families relocated.

Fifty-nine percent of the students at Lola's school were either born outside of the United States or English was not their first language, and 30% of the students received ESOL services. Students at the school represented a wide range of countries including: Burma, Bhutan, Cuba, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Iraq, Mexico, Myanmar, Nepal, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania, and Thailand. The student body of 550 self-identified as 66% Black, 14% Asian, 9% Hispanic, 9% White, and 3% Other, and they were instructed by 36 fulltime teachers. Eighty-nine percent of the students at the Title I school qualified for free or reduced lunch.

Nomination and Recruitment to Study

Faculty members who nominated Lola for the study described her as distinctly "positive" both as a student in the program and as a teacher within her school community. "Her students are encouraged to support each other and to applaud each others' accomplishments," noted one faculty member about her skill at developing strong group interactions within her classroom. "She creates a warm classroom environment and talks to students about how to deal with issues at school and at home in positive ways." Another described her "emphasis on building

relationships and establishing a sense of community in the classroom." Faculty members who nominated Lola had multiple and varied experiences working with her including UACM coursework, field supervision, extracurricular activities, and a study abroad experience.

I met with Lola a total of nine different times between February 12 and May 28, 2015 for six personal and focus group interviews and three observations. The observations included one full-day classroom visit, and two self-selected events: a) Black History Month assembly and b) afterschool soccer league games. In addition, Lola responded to several emails from me and met with me briefly for the purpose of clarification and member checking.

Advocacy = Teaching Humanely + Holding High Expectations + Honoring Students' Cultures

When I asked Lola why she thought that she had a reputation as an effective teacher, she said, "I think it's the relationships I have with my students." She explained the value she placed on relationships in her classroom,

> I think that is the foundation of everything that we do. So, I believe in getting to know my students on an individual basis. They're not just students. They're little people, so, you know, they have different backgrounds, different things to bring to the table, and so I make sure that I kind of bring that out in the classroom. I don't treat them as one-size-fits-all. So, every class that I've had, which is not that many at this point, is completely different, and they all have their different personalities, and it all comes together in unique ways. So, I just kind of try to capitalize on that and then take it from there and get our learning going.
>
> And so, yeah, I think that could be one thing that they [colleagues] see, that, you know, my kids, we have a good time. At the end of the day, they learn most certainly. They definitely perform to the best of their abilities, I think, and they surprise themselves in terms of what they can do, so I don't know if that's maybe something else that people are seeing.

For Lola, treating her students like the "little people" that they were included more than "just teaching." She was dedicated to creating a classroom environment where her students felt that their teacher valued them. She stated,

> I give more than 100%. Everyone says the cliché, 110%, but I feel like I give more than that any time, day or night. If I'm out shopping, whatever it is I'm doing, it's all about my kids. They're my kids. Again, I don't care. You walk into my door; you're mine, as simple as that. Forever-- I don't care; if you move on, you're still mine.

"I have 8,000 pictures on my camera of my students," she said. "Really, these kids are like my own kids almost. If I had kids, I would imagine it would be like this because I have pictures of them everywhere. "

Lola's commitment to children extended beyond her immediate classroom to the broader school community where she also worked to develop close relationships with students. She explained,

> I have kids that have never been in my class that will run up and give me a hug. I have a little girl who's in Pre-K, who calls me Auntie. I don't know where that came from, but every time she sees me, "Auntie!" And her mom was walking by the other day, I was like, I don't know how I became Auntie, but, "Hey Pumpkin, how you doing?" I still give her a hug. It's funny. Yeah, so it is like family.

"So, I have kids that I'm like, 'How do I know you?' she said. 'So they stop by and they give me hugs, because I'm big on hugs, so I hug everybody." Within her work as dance team sponsor, Lola had opportunities to work with older students, and, at times, to maintain relationships with her former students. She found that the connections she made with students at all grade levels multiplied. She stated,

> It's interesting. Even yesterday I was mentoring some fifth graders. These girls do not know me from anything, really, I guess. One of them actually was on the step team, but that's like a new thing. And they come to me with their issues, like, "Oh, Ms. _____, you know, this and this happened today, and what should I do about this?" And I'm like, "I don't know when I became a counselor, but okay, girls, come on. Meet me in my room, and let's hash it out." But I totally feel we should be more like you're just dealing with all students. It doesn't stop with just the students in your class. My expectation is, even still, my fourth graders, they're not – I don't even teach fourth grade. They were third graders last year but, "You're still mine. I don't care. I told you to stop growing. You still kept growing. Whatever. You're still mine."

Treating students humanely was a perspective that Lola carried toward all students in her school.

Lola envisioned humane teaching as one way of advocating for her students, and she explained how her approach was especially important in urban school environments.

> Just making sure that every student has access to quality education and to someone that genuinely cares about where they go in life. And I feel like in urban areas, that kids often have to grow up faster than anywhere else, because they're faced with a lot of different things. So, I think my challenge is to make sure that a kid is still a kid, and that they have an opportunity to learn and to dream really.

Emerging from the high value Lola placed on her students as "little people" was her commitment to high expectations for them both in the context of third grade and in the broader context of their lives, a perspective of anticipatory advocacy. Lola demonstrated the high expectations she had for her students by using her pedagogical skills in responsive classroom management and culturally relevant instruction to protect her students from labels while she actively fostered their identities as lifelong learners. Finally, Lola's commitment to high expectations for her students was extended through acts of advocacy that emerged from her commitment to honoring her students' cultures and backgrounds.

Theme One: Advocating by Treating Kids Like People

"These are all people," said Lola pointing to her students. "These are all people in the making." Lola maintained an affectionate and protective attitude toward her students that was evident in the language she used when speaking of her class,

> We're like a family. So, you know, I tell my kids as soon as I walk through the door, "You're mine. I'm sorry. Like it or not, you're mine. You're one of my babies, and my job is to keep you safe and for us to learn and to have fun together."

In fact, during my observations and interviews with Lola, she constantly referred to her students as "my babies," "my kids," and "pumpkin," and she referred to herself as "a soccer mom" and as

"having 300 kids." For Lola treating kids like "people in the making" included a dedication to the whole child. She explained,

> And really, I guess the advocacy part for me is taking care of my students as a whole. That's emotionally. That's psychologically. That's, you know, all of the above. Making sure that it's not about just your numbers, and what you can do, and how we're achieving, but, "How are you feeling today? You're a little off?" You know, I'll pull you to the side in a heartbeat, like, "Okay, what's going on? Everything okay at home? Do I need to call mom? Do we need to get together?" "Honey, do you need a ride home? I know you really want to be a part of this play. Is that what's stopping you? I mean 'cause we'll take care of it. It's no big thing." So, whatever it is that my kids need in order to be kids, to have fun and to have experiences that they want to experience, as long as they're acting right, I'll make that happen.

Lola attended to her students' emotional needs by using her knowledge of responsive classroom management, by attending extracurricular events that were important for her students, and by seeking out connections with her students' families to foster a feeling of security and belonging. For Lola her students' need for the security of a community was equally important as attending to their self-esteem by anticipating and providing physical needs and protecting and defending them in academic situations. She approached all of her interactions with her students with care for their dignity and respect for them as human beings.

Security. Lola envisioned her class to be like a family, and building a cohesive and supportive classroom community was the foundation of her efforts to support the emotional security of her students. In her program admission interview essay, Lola explained her beliefs about the importance of classroom community, writing,

> As it relates to educating urban children, understanding of community is of utmost importance, as it is an awareness of the interdependence of people. A classroom in and of itself is a community; however recognizing that the classroom is only a part of each child's sense of identity gives the educator the chance to be more successful at making a connection with each child. The ability to understand and foster a sense of community empowers students by creating a stable learning environment and enhancing the learning process.

> Ultimately, a teacher with an understanding and sensitivity to the need of building a community that is inclusive of the classroom and beyond is extremely important. It allows students the stability that is necessary to enable them to focus, and gives them a sense of belonging. As for the teacher, community is about understanding that the task of education is far beyond self, but a fundamental part of perpetuating a better community outside of the classroom and, hopefully, a better future.

She explained that the UACM program had "definitely helped to kind of shape what she wanted" her classroom community to look like. She continued,

> I've always known that I wanted my classroom to be kind of comfortable for my students, but UACM kind of gave me the vision. They gave me the means to do it, so learning about morning meeting and learning about culturally responsible pedagogy, it was all kind of at the time like, "Yes, this is it." So, it helped to shape that feeling, I guess, into something that was more permanent. That's what we do.

Lola had incorporated the development of ground rules into her classroom community. Ground rules are foundational within responsive classroom management, and teacher candidates within each UACM cohort develop during their own ground rules during their first days in the program. Lola explained the importance of ground rules within her own UACM cohort, "I think the ground rules kind of set up the safety net," she recalled. "It was not always pretty, but it was a relatively safe space. We were able to at least not be afraid to truly speak our minds. It was a foundation." Within her classroom community Lola also used the concept of ground rules as a safety net,

> Well, our rules in our classroom-- of course I allow them to participate in that process. I don't just say, "Here are the rules." It has the facade of being democratic, although it's still my classroom. But, you know, number one is, "Respect your community and your people in it." Number two, "There's a time for everything." I actually might be putting these out of order. "Have fun." What was the other one? Now I can't think of them, of course. But basically, it's all about us interacting with each other and with the people around us. You know, we offer it within a school. Of course we have our community, but how do we respect everyone in it and all of that?

Safety or trust within her classroom community was a priority for Lola, and she explained how the feeling of safety that her students experienced in her classroom resulted in positive changes in behavior. She stated,

> You don't have to be hard in my classroom. For example, so we do morning meetings. And I have a special place in my heart for young black men, because I feel like they're so misunderstood. Especially as they get older, they're seen as a threat kind of. You know? And you see it even perpetuated in third grade how they interact with each other. They try to be hard and, you know, whatever. But it's interesting. At the beginning of the year, we do "hug, handshake or high-five," which is like a morning meeting activity. And they greet each other, and they get to choose which one that they want. So, in the beginning it's always like handshake, high-five. And now towards the end of the year it's like, "I want a hug." So, they hug each other. And, you know, it's boys with boys. And before there used to be this whole thing like, "Nah, You're a boy. I can't do that." But now they know each other, and they know that it's all love in the classroom, so they feel comfortable doing that. There's that safety there and knowing that they're not being judged. So just, again, allowing them to have that emotional space to kind of be themselves, and it's okay, you know? To be human. That's exactly it, you know, that's just one of the things that I do.

Setting ground rules as a class was the beginning of the development of a safe and trusting community, and Lola's students benefited personally from the atmosphere.

In addition to fostering a feeling of trust and safety within her classroom community, Lola developed a sense of independence among her students for their own behavior as individuals and as a group by fostering interdependence. Developing a sense of interdependence within her classroom was a belief that Lola had held prior to becoming a teacher. In her program admissions essay, she wrote,

> Community helps to create a stable learning environment, because if it is cultivated successfully, students understand that the learning process is a process that is inclusive rather than exclusive. More specifically, every person in the classroom has a role to play in allowing the next person to learn. If one student is distracted, it affects another, if everyone is diligent, then all can have a better chance at positive results.

Lola explained how she had brought that initial belief into practice through responsive classroom management strategies,

> I kind of make the kids responsible for themselves. I definitely allow them to kind of help each other out, and I make it so that it's definitely logical consequences, – "All right guys, so if you take my time, I have a job to do, I'm going to take your time later. There's going to be something that you want to do that you're going to have to wait on, because we have to get this lesson done." But, I also make it so that they're responsible for each other, because they know very well what they're supposed to be doing. "So if you see your folks, someone that you know, one of your friends cutting up, you might want to help them out, because, otherwise, you're going to have to reap the consequences for that as well." So, and I find that sometimes it gets a little out of hand, because some of the kids get a little bossier, but it helps to prevent me from being the bad guy all the time, and it helps them to take more responsibility for their own actions.

Lola shared an example of how her classroom community was a powerful force for a student with behavioral difficulties.

> One student in particular was a big deal for me, and it wasn't fair that I was so strict on everybody else, because they weren't always the ones kind of enacting the foolishness. It was this student most of the time. But, the thing is, I didn't want to just be mean to that student. You know, kids get a feel for when people don't like them, and when they already have that reputation in advance. So the big thing for that child was to let him know that we cared about him, and we wanted him to be with us. But, you know, "You can't disrespect us and act crazy and do all this other stuff which is taking away from our learning time. So you can go over there by yourself, and when you're ready to come back and join us and act like you have some sense, you're more than welcome."
>
> So, in the beginning of that year, I was like, "I don't know if I can do this." It was bad. It was very challenging. And so at the end of the year it was like night and day for him. And even this year, he still does things, but he's a different kid. He's actually trying to do work. He is. He's a different kid. And so I still always check in with my coteacher from last year, like, "How are our babies doing?" And he's like, "You know, they're doing good. They're growing." We were just talking about their challenges and their accomplishments. And I hope that I had a part in that, especially that one baby where it was like, "Oh my goodness! I don't know what I'm going to do with this kid. I love you, but sometimes I really just want to do something…." *[Laughs]*

The atmosphere of community was immediately evident when I joined Lola's class during their morning meeting. She introduced me to the students who were seated on a large circle on the rug

at the front of the room by saying that I was a visitor, and asking them what that meant. Her students said that meant that I was part of their community, and I should receive respect. They asked how they should address me, and after I told them, we proceeded by going around the circle with the ice breaker activity, "You know what?" During the back and forth banter of the activity Lola shared details of her life discussing exercise, running, and movies that she enjoyed, demonstrating the closeness of the group and the level of familiarity between the students and Lola. She explained that she felt like she did not even have a weekend, because she taught Saturday School. She then proceeded to encourage her students to attend Saturday School, a free resource for students enrolled in that elementary school. "We are making slime next Saturday," she said enthusiastically.

During the course of the morning meeting, students mentioned sports activities they had participated in over the weekend, and Lola reminded several that they had not given her their game schedules. It is apparent that she had attended their games before and that they knew that she wanted their schedules. She explained,

> Anytime that there's something outside of school that they're doing, I'm totally there, because I want to support them in their endeavors. I have a lot of students this year that play sports, so between basketball, football, and cheerleading, my Saturdays are usually pretty slammed.

Lola felt that her students' activities outside of school were just as important as their activities inside. "Again, they're little people. They have lives outside of that, and so I want to encourage them to do whatever it is that makes them happy."

One of the events that Lola selected for me to observe was the afterschool soccer league games that many of her students played in after school. The afterschool soccer league "was a big thing for our school, actually," she explained. "It is the favorite out of all the students. We have a large refugee population, and soccer is the world sport, so they totally aspire to be professional

soccer players." It was after 4:00 p.m. when Lola and I walked through the empty hallways of her school to reach the playground where we could see the grassy field beyond. The field had been divided into three small soccer fields with low cones marking the edges of the playing areas, and pop-up nets served as the goals on each end of the small fields. Between talking with me and a male colleague who was watching the games, Lola yelled for students as they played. "She's a soccer mom," the colleague told me, smiling. "I will not drive a minivan, though!" insisted Lola, laughing. Lola watched each of the games, muttering under her breath naming kids and coaching them. The other teacher joked that they sounded like parents. "Yeah, that's right," quipped Lola. "I've got about 300 kids!"

We walked into the field in the space between the three playing areas, and Lola watched each game, stopping to coach students and yelling their names and cheering. "Wake up!" she shouted to one team. "I tease them and tell them that I will embarrass them," she said. "I tell them, 'You will hear me yelling.'" We laughed when we observed a student miss a shot and then turn to see if Lola was watching. As we turned to leave the field a student ran up as if to hug Lola. "No sweaty hugs," she said holding her arms up high and laughing. "But, tell your brother I said, 'Hello.'"

Lola traveled occasionally to away games of students. She recalled,

> A few weeks ago, one of my students from Saturday school who is a fifth grader this year, he was like, 'Ms. _____, are you going to come to our last game? It's my last game as a fifth grader. You have to come.' And it was an away game, so I had to drive all the way to [town name]. I was like, "Okay, I'll come." But, yeah, they're funny when it comes to that. They know I'll totally support them. So, I came out there, and I was screaming and sweating, because it was hot outside.
>
> I usually I try to make the home games just because of traffic, and I'm trying to get stuff done at school, but I just went to a baseball game last Friday. First of all it was in [town name], which is far, and I got lost, and it started at 8:00 p.m., so we didn't leave until like 10-something. And we lost, but I'm glad I was there,

> because he was crying. I'm like “Dude, it's cool. You guys played real baseball. So it was good.” I'm glad I made that one.

Lola also made an effort to support her students outside of school for other occasions. She recalled one example,

> One of my students was actually honored, and his art was chosen at the [Art Gallery Name], so I asked him if he wanted to come with me to see his work and actually get to attend. They had an event for families and students, and so I had something for his parents to sign to say it was okay for him to ride with me. And, low and behold, his little friends – they all live close to each other. They’re in his class, too. They wanted to come, too, so I had to make more copies and get the signatures and stuff. But we all went down there to see his art and support him in that because it was awesome, and then we went and had pizza afterwards.

Lola explained the results of her support for her students outside of the classroom,

> Well, first of all, they start telling everybody, so this is why I have no life, because if I’m not teaching Saturday school, I’m at somebody’s game or something. But I think it just helps them to know that, you know, I really do care about them. And it’s not just lip service. It’s not just, you know, that I just say that, because I think I’m supposed to say that. I think it kind of helps to solidify that in action versus just words. So, I really think that my students know that I care about them, you know, in all aspects, not just, you know, performing on a standardized test.

Attending her students’ extracurricular activities was a priority for Lola, and she felt that her efforts strengthened her relationships with her students and the classroom and school communities. She also worked to develop her understanding of and relationships with the parents and family members of her students.

Lola expressed her ideas about family engagement in her program admissions interview as well as in her admissions essay. While she acknowledged that fostering family engagement could be a challenge for diverse students she would likely encounter in urban settings, she argued that working to truly understand the situation of each student’s household and to remain flexible would encourage parents and caregivers to participate. “I would do whatever I had to,” she stated. “I would schedule more conferences, send more reports, whatever.” Furthermore, Lola

stated her belief that "respecting different cultures and learning more about them, making connections, and avoiding prejudgments and positive or negative stereotypes" were good approaches to developing relationships with families. In her admissions essay, Lola explained her beliefs about the importance of developing family relationships for students as learners.

> Community has the ability to further enhance the learning process by creating a continuum for the learning cycle if a teacher creates a relationship with the family. Then there can be consistency in a child's live, which includes discipline and learning. In essence, if a teacher supports the family, and the family unit supports the efforts of the teacher, learning is never "finished." It continues in the home as well as at school. Thus, the stability of the learning process is enhanced.

Engaging with families of students was a priority for Lola before she began her teacher preparation program.

Lola admitted that developing relationships with her students' families had been more challenging and slow-moving than she had expected before she became a teacher. She explained,

> I have no problems going into the community, but it also has a reputation. You know, it's a little rough, or it used to be a little rough before they tore it [public housing project] down. I don't really care, because there are generations there. It's kind of hard with the parents, though, because they don't know me. I don't live in that area. The majority of it is torn down now, but people managed to kind of stay within the area. So, it's a very tightknit community, and I think they were kind of like, "Who is this chick coming in?" They hear about me, because I go to things, and I show up. And, actually, you know, they're very receptive to that. But I think last year they were kind of like, "Who are you? And why are you here?" Because that's not necessarily normal. You know? They see it, occasionally. There are a few of us that will go.

She continued,

> But, yeah, I say all that to say that I was speaking to one of the parents or aunts, and I was just telling her, "This community is amazing to see all these different generations supporting the kids out here." Because, I mean, one of my kids, his grandma, two of his aunties, and his mom lived there, and I was just able to kind of talk to all of them, like, "Hey!" And they'd come up and introduce themselves, like, "Oh, yeah, I'm the grandma that helps with the homework." You know? So, it's actually cool, because I get a chance to see what support systems are truly in place. And I see that, again, they're a tightknit community, and they do care about each other, but I feel like, again, because of that misconception that [housing

> project] is rough or whatever, "These parents don't care. They just do whatever." But, really, they do whatever they can to make sure that their kids are loved and successful. So, I think they're starting to warm up to me. *[Laughs]*

Lola pursued relationships with her students and their families to strengthen the comfortable and safe classroom community that she built through responsive classroom management practices. Her actions demonstrated her commitment to her students'' emotional well-beings, one aspect of caring for her students as "little people."

Self-esteem. Another way that Lola cared for her students' humanity was by protecting their self-esteem. She was observant and proactive about providing for their physical needs as well as protecting and defending them in academic situations that she felt were unfair and potentially harmful.

Lola selected Irish Spring soap and a jar of moisturizer for her self-selected artifacts that demonstrated her work as a teacher advocate. She explained,

> Here's Irish Spring soap, and the reason I bought that is because one of my students, he actually had an issue with soap. So, I guess his mom worked at night, and so during the day, she wouldn't even be home when he would come to school. And we noticed that he was kind of odiferous, and it would really seriously take over our classroom. And he would always be that kid that was like, "What?" The other kids were like, "What is that smell?" And, you know, so I pulled him to the side, and I talked to him about it. And he did know, but he would just kind of try to play it off type of thing. And he started crying. And I was like, "Oh, honey, it's okay." I said, "Do you need soap?" And he was like, "Yeah. I don't have any." So, you know, I was like, "All you have to do is ask. It's no big deal. What kind do you like?" And his favorite is Irish Spring, because I guess it's manly or whatever.
>
> I actually have just talked to him, because I noticed, like, he was at Saturday school, and I gave him a hug, of course, because I still talk to him, and I noticed. I was like, "Mm-hmm." I was like, "You ran out, huh?" I said, "You been using it?" He said, "Yeah." I was like, "Do you have anymore?" "Yeah." I said, "No, you haven't been using it. Stop playing." And, of course, it's just between him and me. No one else really knows what we're talking about. And I was like, "Do you need some more? Yes? Okay. Don't even worry about it. Just stop by my classroom, and I got you."

Lola was considerate of the dignity of her students on occasions when she helped them out with physical needs. She explained,

> So, that's just one way [of helping]. Like I said, just kind of making sure that mentally they're okay, because that can be traumatizing. Kids are mean. And, you know, again, if his mom is unable, or she just doesn't realize, it doesn't have to be a big thing. It's just one of those things that, again, you don't have to worry about. I'll take care of you.
>
> And that [moisturizer] is only because I hate when my kids are ashy. [Laughs] Even kids I don't know, I'm like, "Honey, come here. Come here. Let me help you, because it's cold outside." I actually developed a relationship with one of my students now. He used to walk around, and I was like, "Why are your ankles so ashy?" So, I would tease him, because we were just cool like that at that point. And I would always just pull him in my room here. You know, "Here, let me get you," and then I'd just help him put it on. And now he's one of my students. But, you know, just little stuff like that where it's just, you know, just things that help them. It's the little big things, right? And I don't know what their situation is at home. I don't know what their parents are doing or whatever. And I'm not here to judge. But I do want them to feel like someone cares about them wherever they are in a personal way.

Lola was also diligent about treating her students like "little people" when it came to academic situations. She defended them when she felt that they were being assessed too much and when their testing accommodations were overlooked. She described one controversial testing situation and her role in protecting her students' best interests.

> We randomly took a writing assessment, like a prewriting assessment to see where the kids were, I guess, and the way that it was set up was that none of the accommodations for the students were to be enacted. It was just give them the assessment and let them write. And I was furious, so during one of our meetings, I was like, "Listen. We have a large population of ELs." I have the ISE class, so a lot of my students need accommodations, and I told them. They were trying to pacify me, like, "You know, it is just a baseline just to see where our kids are." I was like, "You know what? If my students don't have access to the material, they're not going to be able to show you what they can do, so what's the point? This is not informing my instruction." And then I asked, "What is it doing to their self-esteem?" And I'm like, "These kids are smart. They can do this, but you have to give them the access to the material. If you're not allowing them to have their accommodations, then you're obviously not…"— You know, I was just done.

> It was just third grade [team], an administrator, and then the literacy coach. The administration was trying to stick up for the literacy coach, like, "Well, you just received it last minute. You got that directive, and there's no way you could have implemented all that." And I'm thinking, "Well, why do we roll it out then, because you weren't ready." And then the literacy coach was like, "Well, this is really just to see what the students who are going to pass it anyway can do, because the students that would need the accommodations were more than likely not going to pass anyways."
>
> I just had to be quiet, because I had really taken up that whole meeting just kind of venting about that. I looked at him, and I was just quiet. And I was like, "This is good to know that this is really what you think, and you're my literacy coach. Great." For me, it kind of took away a little bit of, I won't say respect, but his credibility kind of went down for me. Like, "Why are you working at this school? If you don't believe that these students can do it, why are you here?" You know?
>
> I've had a lot of those conversations this year, and it's been very frustrating, because I would like to be on one accord with my staff members. I know that's kind of a utopian idea, but, yeah, I am kind of the black sheep in that regard. And I'm okay with that. I really don't care about being just like everybody else. I've never been like that, and I never will be, and I'm good with that. Like I said, as long as my babies are okay, I'm good. When you start messing with them, we have problems and you're going to hear from me. And so apparently I stepped on some toes.

Lola was aware of economic and academic challenges that faced many of the students in her classroom and school, and providing for students' physical needs, particularly personal needs that might be overlooked by other sources of assistance, was a way to preserve their self-esteem and dignity as human beings. In addition, she was vigilant to consider the self-esteem of her students when decisions were made regarding their academic lives.

Summary – Theme One: Advocating by Treating Kids Like People

Lola treated her students like "little people" by demonstrating care for their basic needs as human beings to feel secure in their school community and to maintain their self-esteem. She used responsive classroom management strategies to build classroom community, attended extracurricular activities, and pursued relationships with her students' parents and caregivers to reinforce a sense of security among her students. Lola also protected and reinforced her students'

self-esteem by defending them in situations that she determined were unfair or had the potential to harm them academically.

Resisting. Lola resisted actions that she felt had the potential to undermine her students' security and self-esteem by speaking up and engaging in what she called "respectful disrespect." She described her personal approach,

> So, I've always been the one to be quick to fight for whoever can't defend themselves. I'm not necessarily a fighter. I'm a little feisty, but when it comes to myself, I'm a lot more, I guess, passive. But when I see other people that are being taken advantage of or whatever, I'm just quick to kind of stick up for that person or that individual or whoever it is.

"There've been lots of things," stated Lola referring to times when she took issue with her colleagues to defend her students or others. Lola described one example where she had to take a stand against her own grade-level teammates to protect her own students and also other third-grade students,

> Well, I know for a fact that some of my colleagues kind of don't get it. It was interesting, last year I actually got into a couple of, I wouldn't say altercations, but disagreements in terms of how things should be handled. So there are a couple of other folks that wanted to basically have a punishment for not passing a multiplication test, like, "They're going to miss their holiday party." And I'm like, "What does that have to do with anything?" "Well, they're lazy, and they're not studying. They're not doing what they're supposed to be doing." I'm like, "But you don't know what their home life is like at all. You don't know if they have those same supports." "When I was a kid, my parents made me –." "Yes. Exactly. Your parents weren't working at night."

Lola explained why her colleagues' approach was especially detrimental for her class, the integrated special education (ISE) class for her grade level,

> There's a broad variety of abilities, so there's a lot of scaffolding, a lot of differentiation that goes along, but those students are not necessarily always on to learn at the same pace. So, yeah, it may be going into second semester, and they still don't know their multiplication facts, but it could just be their learning disability or whatever. So we definitely fell out about that, because I didn't agree. And normally, you know, I'm very like, "Okay, let's do it." I'm supportive. I'm a team player. But I was like, "I don't think that's necessary."

Lola continued,

> It got a little nasty. We would always just kind of talk during our planning, because we worked as a team, because we were departmentalized. And one colleague was basically like, "Oh, this is what I'm going to do." And I was like, "I'm not really feeling that. I don't think that education should be punitive. I think that we're supposed to meet them where they are, and taking away their holiday party isn't going to really do anything. If anything, it's going to add more stress to something that's already stressful." Kids want to be successful. They don't want to come in and fail. There's nothing good about that. You know? So, you know, again, it got ugly. "You're too soft. You're soft on the kids," blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.
>
> At first I was just kind of quiet, and I was like, "Okay, well, I don't necessarily agree with that, but, you know, we need to be on a united front." And so I guess she didn't like that response, so she brought it up in the lunchroom in front of other people and was like, "What would you do if," you know, blah, blah, blah. And she kind of put the whole scenario out there. And I didn't really care if I was in front of people are not. I still said what I felt. Like I said, "I don't believe that we should punish kids for learning or not learning." If anything, I take more responsibility on myself in terms of like, "Okay, well we need to make this more fun," or something so that the kids can get it. You know? And that's part of allowing the child to be a child. Like, yes, they do need to take responsibility for their education, but they're also eight and nine. You pretty much want to play at eight and nine. Let's be honest. If there's no one there to kind of help you to stay focused and give you that example of discipline, you're not going to do it on your own. It's not, you know, innate. So, yeah, like I said, we definitely got into that, and I didn't really care. I was like, "It is what it is. I don't believe that education is punitive, period. So, yes, you can say this in front of all these other people, and, yes, I'm going to hold my ground. Whatever."

"So, that's just one example," explained Lola of a time she had to speak up for her students to resist colleagues "who just didn't get it." Lola felt that this type of advocacy was part of her role as a teacher. She explained,

> And especially my babies. I said, "Listen, I have the ISE class. I don't care what you say and what you think. You're not going to punish my kids." Yeah, so there's been lots of examples of things like that where sometimes my mouth gets me in trouble. I'm a little feisty, especially when it comes to people that can't necessarily speak for themselves.

Another example of Lola's resistance to her colleagues to protect the self-esteem of students took place in the context of step team tryouts for the Black History Month assembly. Lola sponsored the group along with several other volunteers, and she explained the background,

> We really did have try-outs. And so of course, I had to be the nice guy. They always tell me I'm too soft, I don't care. But the students basically got scored. We taught the students a step, and then they had to go up on the stage and perform it in groups and then they were scored from there. At first they [colleagues] were just like, "We're just going to cut people," and I was like, "No, I don't think we should do that." You know, because I had a girl come cry to me, like, "I really wanted to make it!" I was like, "What we should do is incorporate them in some way into the show." So they were the ones that were in the front that had signs at the very front of the stage. So and they were like the protestors. That's what we called them. So they had a piece in the show as well, because it was still very important to them. But of course I was a soft guy for not wanting to just cut people. I'm like, "Dude, they're elementary kids. It's kind of going to break their hearts, just sayin,' It's easy to get them involved."

Lola was able to sway her colleagues, and all of the students who wanted to participate in the production were given some sort of role.

Besides speaking out in defense of students' self-esteem and security, Lola engaged in "respectful disrespect" when she made a decision in the best interests of her students that was contrary to suggestions from her administration. She described one example during a focus group interview,

> There was an email that was sent out to our school that asked us to consider not giving our students recess in the middle of standardized testing, like after day three, which was the longest day ever, in order to prepare them for the upcoming days, and I laughed, and I considered it, and I thought not. [Laughs] And I still took my kids out because, you know, they're so stressed as it is, it doesn't make sense to try to drill – if they don't have it by now, they don't have it. Right then my job was to make sure that they were relaxed, felt confident, and then really knew the strategies that would help them on a standardized test.
>
> I actually just kind of laughed it off because, again, it was – I always call it "respectful disrespect" because, you know, – in the email it said "to consider," and I considered it, and I thought it was best that my students be able to go outside. So, how long did I consider it? About .5 seconds. [Laughter] Just about .5 seconds, because I found it kind of laughable. Yeah. I was just like, "No. These

> are young children. They're eight-years-old, eight, nine, and ten. So no, it doesn't make sense for them to not be able to go outside, because a test is coming up." So, no, I stand by that, and it's how I felt.

Lola resisted pressure to compromise her beliefs about her students' best interests by quietly operating in the manner that she felt best for her students.

Another example of resistance as 'respectful disrespect' occurred as a result of the empathy Lola felt for her students during the rigorous pacing schedule that was required for the standardized test. She explained,

> On the first day we took the test and had about an hour left of the day after everything. Same thing on day three, which was math, and I had read-aloud accommodations, and they [students] had time and a half. That test spanned for four hours, and they had a ten-minute break. Four hours. And they took the whole time.
>
> I mean all of the sections were insane, but four hours. I was just, I couldn't even – you know, I was trying to give them, in that ten minutes, like exercise, something to just try to keep their spirits up, because I was like I want to go somewhere. I can't imagine how they feel. Like I just – four hours. You would have had behavior problems out of me.

Lola resisted negative situations that she felt had the potential to undermine her students' feelings of security and self-esteem by taking a stand and speaking up as well as engaging in acts of "respectful disrespect."

Sustaining. Although Lola was determined to speak up for the humanity of students, she was aware of the negative tension that could result between her and her colleagues. She accepted the unresolved conflict with her peers along with the fact that they openly derided her for "being soft on kids." Lola drew strength to sustain her advocacy for her students as "little people" from her confidence in her pedagogical knowledge and understanding of her students and her own personal experiences and commitments. She described how taking her students out for recess

during standardized testing affected her students and reinforced her confidence in her decision making,

> I can tell when my students are focused, when they have the ability to kind of let out that energy. Again, I have a class full of boys, and boys generally are – they have to move. They have to be able to go and expend some of that energy. They're not likely to sit still and just focus kind of like girls would, but even my girls get antsy. So, yes, I definitely saw a difference, and I think it helped them to kind of relax and have some type of normalcy and outlet for that energy, and, you know, even nervous energy.

Lola also drew affirmation from her colleagues' solidarity with her decision,

> Actually, I feel like a few of them [grade-level colleagues] were kind of with me, you know? So, we were out there, and I just kind of looked at them, and they looked at me, and I was like, "Did you consider it?" And it was kind of a joke. I probably shouldn't have done that but, yeah. And they looked at me. I said, "Yeah, I considered it." And then I just kind of laughed.

In addition to her colleagues' responses, she also drew courage from the fact that there were not repercussions from the administration. She explained,

> So yeah, I mean it doesn't happen all the time, but in this case a lot of us were looking at each other like, "Okay, you've [administrators] really lost your mind. Like, you're not having to deal with these kids all day." I don't know if they have lost touch or what was going on, but I mean I felt all of us [teachers] were pretty much on one accord when it came down to it-- I don't really care what you say. I'm taking them out. There was not much backlash I guess from administration. I think they kind of got the hint since we were all on the same page.

Drawing confidence from her own knowledge about her students' best interests and occasional solidarity with her colleagues was one way that Lola sustained her advocacy for her students as "little people."

Although Lola noticed and appreciated times when her colleagues' actions aligned with her own, she emphasized that her beliefs would not waver either way. "In terms of continuing to do what I do," stated Lola, "it doesn't matter if I get negative backlash or positive backlash. If I know it's right, I know it's right." Lola described an incident involving a colleague, who

complained about an action that she had taken regarding her child who was also a student at the school to the building principal and then to the district office,

> I wasn't worried about it, because I know I did my job. At first it was really hurtful, but then I was like, you know, at the end of the day I know that I do my best for your child and every other child in my classroom every day. It's actually kind of a good thing that I had that negative experience, because it did not change my perspective at all. If anything it strengthened it like, you know, I know I'm doing what I'm supposed to be doing.

Lola relied on her self-confidence to sustain her peace of mind and belief in herself.

In addition to the encouragement Lola garnered from seeing the positive results of her advocacy for her students' security and self-esteem, she drew strength to sustain her efforts from memories of her own school experiences and focusing on the students she served. She recalled,

> What kind of helps me to stay focused is the fact that I had such a unique experience in education. I felt very isolated the majority of my school years, being the only little black kid in a school or in a classroom or whatever and not really getting the support from my teachers. They couldn't relate to me. They liked me, because I was pretty smart and followed the rules for the most part. As a matter of fact, I didn't have a black teacher to instruct me directly until I went to college. I was elated when it happened, because I was like, "Oh, my gosh, you look like me!" So I didn't feel like an anomaly, you know. So I guess it kind of drives me to be that support system for my students, because I know what it was that I lacked and how lonely that can be, and how it can really affect your educational experience. I feel like I did very well. I'm proud of what I did, but I just think about how much further I could have gone if I could have had that support from someone who truly took the time to get to know me as an individual and not just be like, "Oh great, you're fine," but who really supported me.

Ultimately, focusing on her students as "little people" was the most important factor in Lola's ability to sustain her advocacy for their security and self-esteem. She explained,

> My joke is that the reason I got into teaching is because I don't do adults. I work with kids. It's because we're on the same page. I'm a big kid myself. Having to navigate through those different personalities and the different barriers has been a challenge, but I think because at the heart of it I'm still focused on my kids, that I'm able to put up with it. I will go through and go the extra mile and deal with all that foolishness, because at the end of the day I know that my kids are what really drive me. That's what I'm dedicated to, so yeah. I love it.

Lola sustained her vision of treating students like people by relying on her ability to make appropriate decisions, observing like-minded colleagues, recalling her own educational experiences, and focusing on her students.

Theme Two: Advocating by Maintaining High Expectations

"They're the 'untouchables' supposedly," said Lola, referring to the name that her class had been given by her grade-level teammates. "So, I'm like, 'Yeah, whatever, dude.'" As the teacher of the ISE class for two years, Lola was well aware of the challenges many of her students faced, but she also recognized that they were capable of learning and able to demonstrate their own levels of achievement.

Lola advocated for her students by valuing them as human beings and treating them with kindness and empathy as she protected their security and self-esteem. Emerging from her attentiveness to their humanity was also awareness that her students would become adults and that the experiences they had as children could impact their potential for success. Lola maintained high expectations for her students, and she envisioned her efforts in this area as advocacy in both their immediate circumstances and in their futures, an anticipatory advocacy, as she defied negative labels and groomed her students to be lifelong learners.

Defying labels. Lola expressed deep understandings of the nature and prevalence of deficit orientations in her UACM application goals statement. She wrote,

> "Urban" is no longer a term associated with city. It now represents a rainbow of minorities, and has arguably become synonymous with inferior. Ironically, an urban setting is a place as fraught with potential as any suburb or place of privilege. This is why any child no matter their location or status, can be successful as long as the same dedication, understanding and expectations of excellence are set by someone who genuinely cares.

Lola had translated her early awareness and beliefs about the potential for all children to succeed into a proactive approach to maintaining high expectations for her students that included defying negative labels. She explained her approach to negative labels,

> I just believe that all kids are really just kids. I don't necessarily believe in the labels. Even if a student is labeled as special education or whatever, I still have high expectations for them. They don't go down at all in my mind, because I know that every child is skilled and able in some way, shape, or form. So, my challenge for myself and for them is to figure out what it is, and let's make it the best that we can. You may have difficulties in other areas, but I still expect you to try your best, and if I see you doing anything less than that, we're going to have a problem. Like, hey, there's stuff I don't do well in, but I still try.

One way that Lola shielded her students from negative labels was through her use of responsive classroom management practices. She explained the importance of this approach to achieving her vision for maintaining high expectations,

> I don't believe in being mean to my kids. I'm strict, but that's for a purpose. That's to make sure that they are always achieving to the best of their abilities. I have high expectations in terms of how they should act, because I know that they're capable. I love my kids to death. Yeah, I do, but at the same time, I'm not going to tolerate foolishness. I tell them all the time, "You all are brilliant scholars, and therefore you need to act like it."

Elements of responsive classroom management such as ground rules, procedures, and routines, that Lola depended on for building a safe and trusting classroom community also served as safeguards that allowed her students the freedom to demonstrate their abilities and to move beyond negative labels. She explained,

> So, really just giving them the tools that they need, the structure that they need to know what they're supposed to do, but yet the freedom to kind of define who they are within that, like, "What is your role? Are you the helper? Are you the leader?" You know, what is it? So, just giving them the space to kind of be comfortable and be free with themselves and not feel like they're there to just do what everybody else says. I encourage their creativity. I want them to really, like I said, just get to know themselves and be a kid. It's okay. That's how you learn – is to have that curiosity. And so my job is to kind of just cultivate that and really just bring out those characteristics and let them know that it's okay to be who you are, and there's always a place for that.

"It's a delicate balance," explained Lola, "maintaining my individuality while respecting theirs." She acknowledged that being flexible with different behavioral challenges while maintaining her beliefs for her vision for her classroom was especially difficult during her first year of teaching,

> Last year, that was kind of the theme – just trying to figure out how I could still be true to myself and still, you know, not rock the boat too much as a first year teacher. Like, "Who are you, and what are you doing?"

Lola had confidence in the management structures that were in place in her classroom, and she felt empowered to demand excellence from her students. She explained how the supports helped students resist negative labels, of which they were certainly aware,

> They do know what to do, and that's why I get on them super tough when they don't do what they need to do. But, yeah, I think that as a whole – I've actually had this experience, this is my second year with that type of class, and I think they surprise themselves honestly, because they've been labeled and they know it. They know coming in what's going on, and so I addressed that head on, especially with my more challenging students. I told them, "I don't care what happened last year. This is this year, and so it's your decision. Do you want to continue on the same path, or do you want to make a change? It's really up to you. I'm not here to judge you, I'm here to help you." Like I said, they make me proud, they're awesome kids, and they do their best.

Structure provided security for Lola's students, empowering them with the ability to demonstrate their abilities.

Lola's students demonstrated their grasp of her behavioral expectations for the class during my observation. In each instance when redirection was necessary, Lola addressed them as a group and, occasionally, individually with a soft-spoken voice. "Is this line a good example for other classes?" she asked on one occasion. One student replied that the line was "decent but not immaculate," and without another word or look from Lola, the class silently realigned.

Independent thinking and learning. In addition to using responsive classroom management strategies as a defensive safeguard to protect her students from negative labels, Lola

adopted a perspective of anticipatory advocacy, building her students up as lifelong learners and independent thinkers through the use of ambitious teaching strategies. Promoting a love of learning was a goal that Lola professed prior to entering the UACM program. “I hope that I may inspire the inquisitive nature in students and perpetuate their desire to learn, “ she wrote in her program application goals statement. And she noted that working in a Montessori preschool had given her the experience of “learning together” with students that she valued.

Lola explained how she used instructional conversations to develop her students as independent thinkers and learners,

> I would say that my vision for students in my class is for them to be autonomous. Like, autonomous learners, thinkers on their own, and asking for agreement, like the kids know they can agree or they can disagree with someone's answer, and it's still respectful. It's not anything that you must always have the right answer or anything.
>
> As a matter of fact, I kind of encourage mistakes, because we learn from them. I encourage my students to never be afraid to make a mistake, because we always learn, and I make mistakes in front of them all the time. I'm like, “I don't know. Let's Google it. Let's see.” I also encourage them to think about basically their own thought process. Like, “Do I agree with that? Why do I agree with that?” Because a lot of times I'll follow up, “Do you agree? Well, tell me why. Explain.” Or, “If you disagree, explain why.” So that way they're kind of thinking about their thinking, and it's that metacognitive thing as well.

Independent thinking was a skill that fit with Lola’s high expectations for her students, because she viewed them as young people who would one day become adults with serious life choices to make for themselves and their families. She explained,

> That’s why I'm such a big proponent of autonomy. Because if you have the ability to think for yourself, that can totally influence so many other parts of your life. So, if you are constantly thinking, “Well, do I agree with what's going on? Do I disagree with what's going on? Why do I not agree with this?” Whether they're out socially or whatever, it can totally help them just kind of adjust to society and do what they need to do. Maybe not just become a drone, but – Be a leader.

Lola made explicit connections between the thinking and learning she was encouraging for her students and social structures and current events that she felt could impact them as they grew older. She recalled,

> I was talking to my students about what happened the other day with the young man that was killed by the police in Wisconsin, because we've been talking about civil rights, and we were talking about Susan B. Anthony and historical figures and Black History Month and all that good stuff. I was just telling them the reason we learn about history is so that we can learn from those mistakes, and unfortunately, a lot of those mistakes are still being made. So, I really broke it down, even for my young black men I said, "You know what? If you come into an altercation with a police officer, I want you to really think about what you're doing. Don't –," you know, just because there's stuff going on even today, and so I challenge them to think. I challenge them to be individuals and to be responsible for themselves, and I talk to them very frankly about all of those things. It is very conscientious, because I want them to be contributing members to society later on, and I'm kind of glad that I was able to get them at such a young age to kind of, you know, plant the seed at least, if nothing else.

Lola used instructional conversations as opportunities to develop her students as independent thinkers and learners.

In addition to working to foster independent thinking and learning through ambitious teaching, Lola demonstrated her high expectations through other interactions with her students. "I really do encourage my students to come to Saturday school," she explained, "It's optional, yeah. It's not mandatory at all, but it's a way that we try to help our students continue to get what they need to be successful." Encouraging her students to attend Saturday School was a way that Lola communicated her belief that her students could learn and benefit from additional instruction. She explained,

> Actually, it's so much fun. It's a completely different teaching experience. Like, it's so much more laid back. It's more student-driven and talking to the kids. It's giving them that extra boost that they need, but besides that we get to do science experiments, and we don't get to do that all the time. This past weekend we made glow-in-the-dark slime, because we were talking about the states of matter, so it turned out really well. I was a little nervous, but it was good. So, we have a lot of fun.

Lola also made concerted efforts to support her students academically, so that their confidence in themselves would be strengthened. “They can totally do it,” she insisted, referring to her students’ potential to perform well on standardized tests. She explained her perspective on preparing students for standardized tests,

> I mean we're not teaching to a test but we're giving them skills to be successful, so, you know, it's just giving them that ability to kind of move forward and still have confidence to do what they do and perceive themselves as – I call them excellent scholars or brilliant scholars.

I observed multiple examples of Lola’s efforts to bolster her students’ confidence in their academic ability as I observed her classroom for a school day. She encouraged independent thinking by using language such as, “I like how you thought about that,” and “Do you agree?” She asked for elaboration and at times encouraged effort by saying, “You are on the right track. I know exactly where you are trying to go with that.” “I am never going to be mad at someone who is using their resources to figure something out,” she emphasized.

Students explained their thinking, argued points, disputed visual problems, and Lola allowed extended discussions between individuals and groups. “Here’s a challenge!” she said, to get their attention, and the students chanted, “Dum, dum, dum!” before stopping to listen intently to her instructions. Lola also supported effective group collaboration through verbal reinforcement. “Teamwork makes the dream work,” she said on several occasions. Also, as Lola worked with a group, asking probing questions as she guided them toward the answer, she would say, “Talk to each other!” as she turned and walked away. When students called out answers, she asked, “Why? I like the logic, but where are the resources?” and when groups got correct answers, Lola gave each group member a hug and pretend kisses. The message was subtly and explicitly to “keep pushing!” Lola coached to the very end of the lesson saying, “Say it with

confidence! You think you are smart? You bet you are smart!" Intellectual dialogue among themselves along with instructional conversations as a whole group supported independent thinking and learning in Lola's classroom.

Summary – Theme Two: Advocating by Maintaining High Standards

Maintaining high expectations for her students was one way that Lola envisioned her work as an advocate for her students. Her responsive classroom management strategies gave her students supports to defy labels, and her efforts at fostering independent thinking and learning were acts of anticipatory advocacy that positioned her students for success in their immediate and distant futures. Lola also bolstered her students' confidence in their academic abilities by providing and encouraging opportunities for additional instruction and preparing and pushing her students to grow.

Resisting. Lola recognized that while she envisioned her work as a teacher advocate to include maintaining high expectations for her students, even in her own school environment there were colleagues who had low expectations for her students' potential for success. Referring to the nickname, "The Untouchables," that her class had been given by her colleagues, she explained,

> Seriously, you have to hear my teammates talk about it. They're like, "You're going to do it again next year, right?" I'm like, "Listen, this is my third year, I don't mind, because I'm a team player, but I'd also like to have other experiences if possible." But they're like almost afraid to take that [class] on. I'm like, "You can do it just like I did it."

When asked if she thought her colleagues had the skills to take on the ISE class and be effective, Lola reflected on the source of her own confidence. "I guess maybe that [her confidence] is from a privileged perspective," she admitted, "because I'm UACM trained, so I take great pride in

that." Lola already had some insight into differences in teacher preparation experiences. She explained,

> I'm serious, though, because I've seen other people, and I've had two student teachers this year, one UACM and one not, and although both of them had their merits, I could definitely tell the difference in the way that they approached teaching.

Lola pinpointed her ability to resist the inclination to allow expectations to slip, saying,

> I think it just comes down to the culturally responsive aspect of our program. It just makes sure that we are addressing the whole learner and figuring out what it is that will reach them, because you can teach someone anything if you can really break it down on their level-- or not.

In addition to approaching teaching with an eye toward meeting every learner with the intention to reach him or her, Lola resisted low expectations by protecting her students from experiences that jeopardized their belief in their own abilities. Lola explained her perspective on protecting her students' academic identities,

> I have meetings always, but usually it's a low-key type of thing, because I don't want my students to necessarily realize other people's opinions about them, if that makes sense. Because they're very intuitive, they recognize what's going on. Even if it's not necessarily spoken, they understand how people interact with them, and they may not be able to articulate how that makes them feel or whatever.

Finally, Lola resisted low expectations because of her strong awareness of her students' lives as adults and their potential impact on society. She explained,

> I want those kids to grow up, to be old. You know, to be able to lead the next generation, but if you're arrested or you're whatever, whatever travesty can happen, you don't have those opportunities. Actually it's maybe kind of selfish, because I know that eventually they'll be leading me and making decisions for me when I get older, so I want them to have their heads on their shoulders.

Lola resisted low expectations for her students by relying on her knowledge of culturally responsive teaching and holding on to her awareness of and hope for her students' futures as valuable members of society.

Sustaining. Lola argued that sustaining high expectations for her students began with having realistic expectations. She expressed frustration with decisions her building administrators made that she felt subjected her students to excessive assessments and undermined their academic identities.

> I think the administration at my school has the right idea. It's just the execution that makes it so much harder, and actually it becomes counterproductive, because they have so many wonderful ideas about keeping the students to the forefront, but it becomes lost in the sauce. There's so much bureaucracy and paperwork and things that we should do, and blah, blah, blah, that it's frustrating. When it comes to teaching, you have to have a realistic perspective, not an idealistic perspective, because you can be idealistic all you want to be, but once they get out into the real world, and once you really start teaching, it gets real, fast. So you definitely have to understand what you're facing in reality, and just kind of attack it from there.

In addition to being realistic with her expectations for her students, Lola drew encouragement from the results she observed in both her students and her colleagues from her work defying labels and fostering independent thinking. She explained,

> I noticed that the majority of the time my kids get in trouble, they're not with me. I had one kid get suspended for throwing a book at a kid's head. Like, "What are you doing?" But mind you, it was in specials, I wasn't even around, so it was like, yeah, having them be accountable, it's a big thing. I'm like, "You guys are leaders everywhere that you go. You set the example. They look to you, what you are doing, how you are treating each other, and-- my head hurts." You know, I think that has something to say about the classroom management and the other people that they're going to, right? It just may not be the same way.

Besides noticing that her own behavior management strategies were most effective for her students, Lola knew that her colleagues also noticed the difference. She acknowledged that her responsive classroom strategies had caused some of her peers to at least think about alternative ways of managing students' behavior.

> Teachers, like my team and stuff, I think they've kind of seen the value in what I do. I'm not a yeller. I don't yell at my kids. What I do is I tell them, "You can play now or you can play later. But, if you take up my time, I have a job to do, and you have a job to do, so if you take up your time now, you won't like what's going to happen later." You know? So, I'm not a yeller. I've never been a yeller. I don't

> have to threaten my kids. I don't, because they know. And, matter of fact, if they're talking while I'm talking, I'll just stop, and it's so funny because they'll be like, "She's waiting. She's waiting!" because they know. I tell them, "Listen. You make me wait, you're going to wait for something later that you want." They know. They know exactly what it is. You know? I don't have to do all the other stuff.

Even as a second-year teacher Lola had found herself in a position to assist her colleagues on occasion,

> Usually it's in things that I suggest or in trying to help other teachers if they come to me for ideas, or if they send kids my way I'll try to help them figure stuff out, like how to redirect just whatever it is, or activities that they can do to kind of help their students. I try to be low-key. I don't try to be in the forefront, I promise you.

Perhaps the strongest source of encouragement to sustain her commitment to high expectations for her students was actually Lola's true belief in the potential of each individual student. She elaborated,

> So I think that in my case, it's just a hope for something better for them. I kind of have, I won't say the opposite, but because I do know there's so much negativity in the world, and I hope that none of my children have to endure that, but I also know what they've already endured, or what they've already been through. And so it brings to mind, one of my students, who towards the beginning of the year, was like, "Ms. _____, I can't do this. I'm not smart enough. I'm not smart. I got an F. I know I got the answer wrong." And I'm like, "What are you talking about? You know the answer to this. You're just as smart as anybody else, it's just different how it comes out." So for me, for that particular student, it's all about building his confidence and having him believe in himself. Because at the end of the day, whether I'm there or not, that's what's going to stick with him. So I think it kind of goes to catering to each student's needs, what's going to make them successful later on. You know what I mean? I think that's the big thing, making sure that they have hope for themselves, not just me having hope for them, or me wanting to steer them somewhere, because at the end of the day, we only have 180 days, 190 days. So whatever it is, I can kind of help them believe in themselves, that's what my goal is.

A hope for a great future for her students along with positive responses from her colleagues and students and realistic expectations sustained Lola's commitment to high expectations for her students.

Theme Three: Advocating by Honoring Students' Cultures

While Lola focused her vision for her work as a teacher advocate primarily on her students as individuals, treating them like "little people" and maintaining high expectations for their futures, she also recognized and valued their cultural backgrounds. Her commitment to the work of teaching as advocacy exceeded the bounds of the classroom as she supported efforts to teach about and to instill respect for influential African Americans. Lola was deeply conscious and grateful for African-American leaders and role models who were great change agents for their own communities and for future generations, and she felt a responsibility to acknowledge their contributions and to instill cultural knowledge and pride in her students. She explained her thoughts,

> That's all part of the vision, just making my community better. Like I said, I mean I take that to heart, when I say that my ancestors and people that have come before me have sacrificed so much, I feel like it's my duty to continue to do the same, and to help future generations have that ability, you know. I'm tearing up because I'm serious, you know.

Honoring her students' backgrounds was one way that Lola advocated for her students as individuals.

Lola selected her school's Black History Month assembly for one of my observations of her advocacy work outside of the classroom. Remembering and honoring African Americans who made a difference in their communities was a privilege and duty that Lola took seriously, and she wanted to instill the same attitude in all of the students of the school. "I've always loved history," she explained. "But I think especially becoming a teacher, making sure the students know how much they have to be proud of" was a responsibility Lola felt was part of her role as a teacher. She continued,

> You know, I feel like, especially for African American students, or even just minority students in general, they have no idea where they come from, and why

> they're so amazing. You know, "You are amazing, because your ancestors truly sacrificed for you, and we have no choice but to be brave because of the things that they did for us."

The events planned for Black History Month gave the entire school community opportunities to participate, but the assembly was the work of grades 3-5. "We try to make it a production," she explained. "We want to get kids involved." She continued,

> Like I said, it's a big deal, right? It's part of their ancestry, and I try to do the same thing for my refugee students as well. We try to do research projects on other countries and everything, just to make sure that they know where they come from. It's huge, so huge. For sure, we're helping them; again, just to realize who they are and how important they are.

Black History Month was an important event for Lola's entire school community with numerous recognitions and events planned throughout the month that culminated during one school-wide assembly where guests included families, community members, and school district personnel. Lola explained the events,

> So actually Black History Month, or really that day was huge. I'm part of the committee; we have 10,000 events and things to do. We have a portrait contest. We have a parade of doors where the students in each classroom have to kind of choose an inventor, an actor. They had different categories to choose from. They researched and then they decorated their door based on that.
>
> For me, it's my favorite time of the year because it fits so well into our curriculum, so they [students] are so into that, especially civil rights and stuff like that, so you know we learned about Thurgood Marshall and Frederick Douglass and Harriet Tubman, and Mary McLeod Bethune as part of our curriculum. That's a chance for us to kind of extend and get more into it, so I know my class does. We have other ways to get the school involved, but for us it's huge, because I love that era. I actually kind of use it to say that they [famous Black Americans] are changing things for their communities as well. Then towards the end of the year, when we do our problem-solution project, I said, "Remember what they did to change their community? You guys are going to get an opportunity to change yours."

Lola was a member of the planning committee for the events, and despite the many different perspectives represented within the group, she found herself in a position to influence the theme and tone of the celebration.

> For Black History Month, all the activities were planned. The committee itself, there had to have been, I guess 10 people 'on the committee,' but you know how that goes. There are large groups, and then a few people do the majority of the work. I mean, honestly, I didn't even sign up for the Black History committee. They called me out, and they called me out again for the steppers/dancers. I don't know how that happened, but it was fine, it was for the benefit of the kids. I was willing to put the work in, no big deal. We just voted on the activities, and I'm kind of glad they did, call me out I mean, because I kind of had to focus them [committee members] a little bit, like, listen, "We're not going to do Beyoncé, because she's not a historical figure. We need to basically have them [students] be aware of what their history is, why they should be proud, and how we should represent that. There's so much more than just whatever artists that we see today. There's a lot of blood, sweat, and tears, and a lot of sacrifice that went into why we celebrate Black History Month."

Lola found that her challenge working on the planning committee was to keep the committee focused. "It was a mess in the beginning," she admitted. "We all kind of brainstormed." Lola recalled the final assembly program,

> I definitely don't take credit for everything, but I think once we focused in on it, then it was like, oh everyone saw the vision. Like, "Yeah, we're not twerking on the stage, I'm sorry. That's not Black history." It's, I guess urban-centered, but that's not what we're here for.

Lola took on extra responsibilities and devoted extra hours to ensuring that the Black history month assembly honored African Americans in a way that she felt was appropriate and authentic.

I observed the Black History Month assembly, which took place in the school cafeteria midday on a school day. Colorful paper chains draped the stage, and large student-drawn portraits of African-American leaders were placed on the walls within and around the stage. Giant fabric swaths of cloth in rainbow colors hung between the portraits, and red helium balloons framed the stage with multicolored balloons running down the center aisle. A large sign that stretched along the base of the stage read, "Contribution."

As I observed the final preparations for the assembly, the excitement was palpable. Small groups of teachers, students, and parents were in and out of the room moving chairs and adjusting decorations, and the atmosphere was joyous with music playing on the overhead speakers. The chairs were arranged in rows from close to the front of the stage almost to the back of the cafeteria, and on the right side of the room, risers were set up at an angle for the grade-levels to act as chorus groups during the musical production. While the students began to enter the cafeteria by grade levels, the song "Hero" by Mariah Carey played, and a video presentation was projected on a large screen at the front of the stage showing the names and listing the accomplishments of famous Black Americans including: Jesse Owens, G.W. Carver, Rosa Parks, Benjamin Banneker, Shirley Chisolm, Malcolm X, Marian Anderson, Barak Obama, Duke Ellington, Frederick Douglas, Martin Luther King Jr., Little Rock Nine, and Charles Drew. Positive character words were interspersed within the video including: strength, courage, peace, determination, vision, and trendsetters.

Adults quieted the students several times as they were entering and getting seated in the room, because the students' excitement was brimming over, and their excited conversations began to drown out the video. Once all of the children and guests were seated, and the third-grade students were situated on the risers, the assembly began with the recitation of the poem, "Because of Him/Her, I Can."

A student welcomed the audience and introduced the step team. The 12 steppers entered from a side door to the song "Glory" by Common and John Legend and proceeded down the center aisle to the stage, holding large poster-sized signs emblazoned with character words written in glitter. Lola entered just behind the group and quickly took her place at the audio system located in the middle near the front of the audience. Once the members of the step team were

positioned on the stage, one of the steppers addressed the audience and explained the history and significance of stepping, describing it as movement with words and sounds that demonstrates alliance. Lola operated the audio system for the three numbers that the group performed, signaling the group with her hands when to start, stop, and speak, "Louder!"

The audience applauded loudly at the end of the step team performance, and the group scrambled quickly down the aisle and out the side door. After the winners of the portrait contest and the schedule for the "parade of doors" were announced the grade-levels presented the musical, "African American Inventors" by Patsy Ford Simms. Each grade level took a turn on the risers to read a poem about the contribution of African American inventors and to sing a song related to the individuals' work. Curiosity and the desire to help others was the theme for each of the inventors including: Benjamin Banneker, Garrett Morgan, and Granville T. Woods. The step team performed the closing act of the assembly, and again Lola directed the group and operated the audio system for the number.

Lola described her feelings about the planning and preparations and the performances,

> I was so elated at how awesome that they did. They [the steppers] put a lot of work into it, a lot of effort. They cared very much about how that turned out, and they were super excited too, so it was really cool. We had practice every Tuesday and Thursday from 3:00 to 4:30, you know. It was a few [practices] definitely, but they were troopers and they were so excited about it. It was a really good experience, you know. They were so excited. Yeah, the energy, right? They felt really good. And in fact, they wanted to do it again, so the next time that we had our standardized testing assembly, they were like, "We want to do it again. We have to have another performance." They were so stoked. I guess it was a huge confidence booster for them.

"Parents were excited that their children were going to be performing," said Lola, "And I know at [School Name], it's a big thing. Any time we have anything, parents are always invited." She continued,

> I think it's going to be something that's going to be continued on next year, because the parents were delighted too, they loved it. This is something good. As a matter of fact, the parents of the younger students, Pre-K and stuff, are like, we want this too. So my principal did come and talk to me and I said, we'll see, because I'm tired, and of course, now I won't be there next year.

Teaching students about influential African Americans and instilling in them a sense of pride for their history was one way that Lola honored her students' cultures, an effort that she felt demonstrated gratitude and hope for the future.

Summary – Theme Three: Advocating by Honoring Students' Cultures

Lola advocated for her students by honoring their cultures, and this included teaching about their ancestors and history. The Black History Month assembly was a major event for Lola's entire school community, and she took a lead role in planning and production, requiring many additional hours of work as well as emotional and intellectual investments.

Resisting. Although Lola had significant support in the work she undertook for the Black History Month production, the varied opinions and perspectives on the activities complicated the planning. She resisted some of the ideas of her colleagues, because she felt very strongly about her own vision for the event. "I think I'm a little, actually I know I'm a little-- I get this from my best friends, everybody that knows me, I'm A LOT afro-centric and power to the people," said Lola. "They tease me about that all the time. My undergraduate degree was in Africana studies so, you know." Lola knew that her background gave her a unique perspective on cultural celebrations and a critical eye when it came to portraying culture. As a result, Lola reflected on the purpose of the assembly and worked with the committee to influence the final result. "These are the kinds of things you think about," she noted. "It's not for me to criticize or anything." She continued,

> I totally appreciate the contributions and the effort, so I try to take it easy on folks, and just gently steer. "Okay, perhaps we can do this as the overall theme." It [the

> musical] was all about the characters, so yeah, we had to keep that. Like I said, I was not going to do Beyoncé. I'm sorry, I can't. No.

"Gently steering" her colleagues was an effective way of resisting activities that Lola felt were not helpful in honoring her students' cultures.

Sustaining. Taking a leading role in the Black History Month assembly required extra hours and emotional and intellectual investment from Lola. She took on the work with a positive attitude, not only because she knew "it was the best thing for the kids," but also because she was humbled by the opportunity to impact her students, and she a deep sense of awareness of her own background and gratitude toward her ancestors. Lola sustained her vision to honor her students' cultures even when the activities were not ones that she would have chosen. Specifically, she discussed the Black History Month door-decorating contest,

> It's actually probably my least favorite, because it's so much work. [Laughs] Usually I'm putting so much into helping them to understand that, that it is just an extra thing to do to check off. But I mean it's so important to participate and make sure that it's cohesive and all that good stuff. And, yes, they did get to learn, but I'm trying to integrate curriculum. I'm trying to make sure my class has a) what they need, and b) that we can extend it a little bit further. I participate, but I feel like it doesn't go as much in depth as I would want it to go.

Lola's background and her belief that teachers influence students' confidence and self-esteem also fueled her commitment to honoring her students' cultural backgrounds. She explained,

> I think it's just kind of an intrinsic motivation thing. Like I said, for me there are certain experiences that I had that were kind of isolating, and I remember there were a lot of things that did stick with me. So I guess just being humbled and understanding that the small things that we do can totally affect a child's life. That's why I try to make sure that I am doing things that will positively affect them as opposed to negatively affect them. I'm really just kind of hopefully instilling that confidence and giving them that sense that someone cares about them in the world.

Lola's perspective of gratitude for her own culture and history as well as her feeling of responsibility for her students' knowledge about their own cultures sustained her efforts as she worked with the school community to celebrate Black history.

Conclusion

Lola envisioned the strong relationships that she built with her students as foundational to her advocacy for them. For her, treating children like "little people" included a sense of responsibility for their security and self-esteem with a sense of anticipatory advocacy. In addition, Lola maintained high expectations for her students, actively defying labels and encouraging independent thinking and learning, even as she fostered understanding and appreciation for her students' cultures. Lola's experiences growing up with loving, adoptive parents shaped her vision for her work as a teacher. She recalled the circumstances surrounding her upbringing,

> You know, I feel that I could have gone either way in that knowledge, but I chose to perpetuate what they started. Again, I just feel like a sense of responsibility. I was given this amazing blessing and gift, and for me it is to kind of like continuing to pay it forward. Like how can I contribute to other people? I see a lot of myself in them [students] in that, again, I didn't have a choice in the situation. I was placed in that situation, so all I could do was make the best of it, right? We were in foster homes for a year or a year and a half, so it was just my sister and me. Fortunately we weren't split up. That was such a big thing. Because we weren't split up, she was my baby, and I had to take care of her. You know, I was very overprotective, I still am. She's 27, and I don't care. That's probably where I get that nurturing thing. Your story plays into who you are. I don't hide it. I feel like it's just part of my past that shaped who I am, but I don't think it defines me in any certain terms, you know, it's just kind of something that happened.

Lola nurtured her students by caring for them as human beings and building a classroom community that mirrored the support of a loving family.

Lola also credited her own deep respect for the power of the teaching profession itself for inspiring her acts of advocacy, stating,

> I'm thinking about truly valuing the profession of teaching, and really understanding what it means. It means so much more than I think a lot of people, even within the profession, kind of give it. We really do have so much influence over these little people's lives, and I don't know if everyone values it kind of like that, like we do. I have pictures and videos that I show everybody. You would think they were my kids, because I'm like, "Look at that! They're so funny," you know. I show them off like they're mine. They are mine to a certain extent, but I think that's what it is, just really truly valuing the wonderful opportunity to truly make a difference. I know it sounds idealistic, but it's real, it's so real.

A deep respect for her potential to make a difference in her students' lives and futures was motivation to hold high standards and to inspire students to understand and value their cultures.

Lola explained how the UACM experience had helped her to put her beliefs and visions into action within a real classroom. She recalled,

> I think that the program as a whole helped to provide focus for me personally in terms of what I was supposed to do. This was a career change, and actually stepping into our classroom, the UACM classroom, and being able to really kind of speak with like-minded people and learn with like-minded people, it was just like, "Yes! This is what I'm supposed to be doing." So it was such a great moment for me.
>
> Besides all of the things that we learned from our books and stuff like that, I think that some of the examples that were set by our professors definitely were way more powerful. I remember when Dr. _____, he sat us down and he had a real-life conversation, and was like, 'Listen guys, I know that you're tired, I know that you have all of these things going on, but at the end of the day we have a job to do,' and it was like him bringing us back. But it just showed that he cared about who we were as individuals, but also that he cared about our education and what we were supposed to be doing. I just remember certain instances like that where it was like, "Wow, so this is what I should be doing as a teacher as well." It was like this is how you show that you care, right? It's not just about doing amazing things with parents or whatever. It's the little things that really stick out in your mind and kind of stick with you.

In addition to the practical difference that her UACM experience made in her teaching, Lola discussed the broader influence the program had made on her perspective.

> I think just my thought process is different. The way I approach things is different. I think there's an aspect of maturity that probably wasn't there when I started, and really just more self-reflection, and really recognizing my weaknesses and being okay with them, and doing the best that I can to work on them and continue to

> grow. The program started that process, and now it's just kind of continuing on a lifelong journey.

For Lola, participation in the UACM program had given her the tools to make her idealistic views of teaching a reality in an urban high-need school while also giving her direction for personal growth. She explained how her reflection had led her to make a change.

> I've actually just become a lot more reflective about my practice and who I am and in what ways I'm willing to make a stand for my students and how I'm going to continue to do that. The ideas are not different, because I just feel like at the core, that's just who I am, and I feel like I'm kind of on the right path. It's just the right execution. It's all about execution.
>
> That's why I took the summer off. I didn't teach summer school, I really just want to kind of get back to self and basics and me so that I can start next year fresh and renewed and just ready. I feel like my spirit needs a little cleansing, so. You know, just to kind of get rid of all those negative experiences and get back to center.

In fact, at the end of the school year, Lola announced that she was leaving her school to teach in a nearby metro-area school district. “I'm actually kind of sad that I'm leaving,” she said, “because my first year of teaching those third graders, they're going to be fifth graders.” Lola had struggled with the decision to leave the school, and she admitted, “It was kind of sad.” “It almost made me stay, I'm not going to lie,” she admitted. “I'm so proud of them to see how far they've come. It's amazing.“ She continued,

> It was funny, because I had prayed on leaving, right, and every time that I kind of started wavering, “Well, maybe I should stay because it's a great school, and I'm going to miss my kids,” and something would happen. I promise you every time, like within a day, something happened where I'd be like – it is a sign. – I made the right decision. It's time to go. So, doors opening and closing, you know it.

Lola planned to return for her students’ graduation the following year. “No, seriously, I could not miss that for the world,” she said smiling.

> Lola recognized her role as a teacher as one of privilege and power, she explained, It's very humbling to have that privilege [to teach]. It's a privilege, right? That's a privilege to be able to interact with all these great future minds, so, yeah, like I said, I just want to do it better. Hopefully, I can be even more effective, and

> really, even if I just reach one, it's all good. That's all I can really hope for. I hope so, I really do.

Lola's vision for her work as a teacher advocate included treating her students like "little people" by protecting their feelings of security and self-esteem, by maintaining high expectations for their futures, and by honoring their backgrounds and cultures. She resisted people who she felt "don't get it" as demonstrated by their low expectations for students and their limited appreciation for influential historical figures and cultural experiences by at times speaking up loudly and engaging in acts of "respectful disrespect" and on other occasions by being quiet or "gently steering" colleagues. Confidence in her realistic expectations, a sense of gratitude and responsibility, evidence of her impact on students and colleagues, and an unshakeable belief in her students' abilities and potential gave Lola the encouragement to sustain her work as a teacher advocate.

Jordan

I started seventh grade at a school that was a totally different environment from elementary. The racial demographics were similar, but totally different culture-- metal detectors, see-through bags. My mom was like, "Um, no. We gotta go." My parents said, "This is not what we want; this is not the right environment." They just wanted me out of that school. It was bad.

My mom had been up at my elementary school all the time. It was a theme school, which is really community-oriented, and everyone is involved, and the parents are required to volunteer, and all that. I went to that elementary school until sixth grade, so middle school was a culture shock.

My parents didn't tell me ahead of time. They went and looked for a house. I wasn't there when they picked out the house. I wasn't there when they decided to move. I wasn't in the process. Then we got to the new school and they said, "You are going to love it! Blah, blah, blah," and it was a brand new school too. They took me that first morning. We met the principal, met the teachers. It was just so different.

My best friend growing up next door to me was White, but all at once— all White people, cows, chickens, you know, just everything. It was like— okay.

Nobody shunned me; I felt welcomed. It wasn't like that, but you know, it was just different.

Nobody looked like me.

Education and Background

"Oh, I loved school, loved school," recalled Jordan, an African-American woman in her mid-twenties. "My [third grade] teacher, she was just awesome. Not only did she teach us, but she got to know us." Jordan attended elementary school in an Atlanta metropolitan school district before she moved to a rural community in seventh grade. She described the influence of her favorite teacher on her decision to teach,

> She would take us out to eat. We would go to her house, and she would have parties for us. So I was like, "That's a teacher? That's what I want to do!" She inspired me to do a lot of things. We had the same teacher for two years, so, to me, they were able to give more – put more into us because they knew us for a longer period of time. I'm not saying she did everything right, but if you have a connection with somebody, you learn a lot from them.

After a distinctly positive experience in an urban elementary school, Jordan's parents relocated to a rural community where she completed middle and high school. "After I had my little breakdown for two weeks," Jordan recalled about the weeks following the move to the new school, "the third week, basketball team, track— I adjusted." "I was involved in everything – 4H Club, Beta Club. You know, you just lived at school, and then once you left, you did some more things. Then it was homework and bed," Jordan continued.

"We have always been tight knit," explained Jordan, referring to her family, and family involvement was an important part of Jordan's upbringing. She described growing up with her younger sister,

> They were just always involved no matter what it was. Like, we started dancing when we were two, just the two of us, always doing something, staying busy in the moment. But that's how my grandmother was with my mom. My mom took piano when she was little. We took piano. I think maybe it's just tradition.

Jordan valued the many experiences and opportunities to which she was exposed as a child and teen, and when the time came time to select a college, she purposefully chose a historically black college and university (HBCU) located in a major urban city over 600 miles from her home with the intention of broadening her experience. "That's one reason I decided to go to [HBCU NAME]," she recalled. "It helped me to learn more about me and my cultural background." In fact, one of Jordan's college assignments was the beginning of her awareness of the unique experiences and perspectives that existed within her own family.

"My one grandmother grew up in Birmingham," she explained. "My other grandmother is from New York." She continued,

> I don't think I got into to it [Black history] until I had a project in social studies at [HBCU Name], where I actually had to interview somebody that was 60 or older. So I chose to interview both my grandmothers. I didn't really get interested in the backstory until I kind of heard them, and just to hear about those particular time periods, the changes.

> My grandma in Birmingham, my dad's mom, she is retired, and she actually goes around and sings during Black history month to the schools, because she was part of the choir, one of the choirs there who were, you know, during the Civil Rights Movement, downtown Birmingham. She is more reserved, like, some of the things I'll say, she'll be like, "Oh, my goodness!" like a southern lady. She travels a lot with her church.
>
> My mom's mom still works. She's 80, and she works in the head office at a downtown college. She does all their websites and stuff like that. Oh yeah, she's very tech savvy! I go to her for questions. She loves to travel. She goes on her own with her groups of friends. Somebody she met on Facebook who lives over there is over a lot of the different nonprofits there. She was able to visit an orphanage, and she's been back. The lady invited her to come back. Next year she's going to Italy. Like, she just loves to travel and be out. She's not married anymore. When I tell her things, she is like, "No, uh huh, go out! Do it!"
>
> So you just kind of get interested in the history and how they were involved, and they were in the technology movement. So, you know, they still have the same values, but they just look at it from different perspectives.

Jordan's appreciation of her own family's history and differences of perspectives were foundational during her undergraduate education. She graduated cum laude earning a bachelor of science degree in human development specializing in early childhood education.

Journey to Teaching

"I've known I wanted to be a teacher since third grade," stated Jordan. Attending [HBCU NAME] in an urban-intensive community gave her experiences that were instrumental in steering her career. In her application goals statement she wrote,

> I had the opportunity to mentor and tutor students in this urban setting, I experienced many teachable moments and challenges. That opportunity further opened my eyes to the critical need for non-judgmental and caring teachers and made me more determined to [continue] on my set career path.

Interning as a mentor and counselor for young people in several summer camps and programs and in Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America as well as teaching dance gave Jordan direct experience that she felt was relevant to teaching. "I became really interested in urban education

after I took a social foundations course in college. I think it was my sophomore year," Jordan recalled.

> We read books like *Savage Inequalities* and about Marva Collins, who opened up her own school, and she was focused on not just the education, but what they needed as far as the whole child experience. So that's where I picked up urban education, from [HBCU NAME} and seeing that it was more than just going into a classroom and making cute posters and arts and crafts.

The undergraduate social foundations course on urban education made a lasting impact on Jordan and her beliefs about the needs of inner city children, "It is a known and proven fact that urban areas need more qualified and dedicated teachers," she wrote in her application goals statement. Jordan graduated from college with the intention of becoming a teacher in an urban setting.

Jordan recalled the next phase in her journey toward a teaching career,

> I went away to school to [Major City name]. Came home, was ready to work. I was going to get a job [teaching], but when I came back, the credentials I had didn't match for Georgia, so I had to change up what I was doing. I was like, "I'm just going to get a job." So then I didn't. I filled out like 50 applications. I was like, "They need to tell you what to do after college!" Finally, I came across AmeriCorps, and I got the position. Well, first I got a daycare position. I worked there for three weeks, and then AmeriCorps called me, and I was like, "Goodbye, daycare!"
>
> I just thought it would be give me more [options], just because Americorps works with everybody in the city. I was able to work with the mayor, and I was able to actually go into the communities to work with residents who got grants to beautify their neighborhoods. So, I would actually go out, scope out what they wanted to do, give them the grant. I read applications, went shopping with them for supplies. I spent long hours, and I would actually get volunteers to come out and help them beautify their communities. In the midst of that, I ran into UACM, and I started the application process to get into the program.

In her position as a community engagement coordinator for AmeriCorps, Jordan logged 1,700 hours, and the experience solidified her determination to teach. "I wanted to work with diverse/urban students to be a positive influence and give advice, to be an all around person not

just a teacher!" she recalled during her program interview. "I am ready to become a leader in the field of education. I strongly believe that I will be able to make a positive impact on the students in the classroom as well as within their communities," she wrote in her application. The UACM program philosophy for education matched Jordan's beliefs. "The fact that I will be joining people with common goals will make it easier for us to network with each other, the students, and the community," she stated. The UACM cohort provided Jordan a community of support as she completed the program and then took a fulltime position at an elementary school in the city of Atlanta.

School and Classroom Context

Jordan was completing her second year of teaching second grade at an urban high-need school within a high-need metropolitan school district near the city of Atlanta. "I'm the second-grade team lead this year," she stated. "There are four of us, and two are new to the school. Another teacher was team lead, she went up to third grade, and the other one is in administration now." Jordan had taken on leadership positions within her school community almost from the moment she became a faculty member.

Jordan described her school culture positively. "It's a very sharing and supportive environment," she stated. "I'm a very open person," she continued. "I ask people questions when I see things they are doing [with their students]. When I see what they're doing, I'm like, 'Can I please get that?' and 'How did your class like it?'" Jordan also had opportunities to support others within her school community.

> I think a lot of people do come to me for ideas, and I like to share my ideas. People always come up to me. I've had parents to say, "Oh, my gosh! We're supposed to get to work at 7:00. Are you at the school?" And I'm like, "Yes, bring them in." So, a lot of parents know my reputation. A lot of teachers do too. I always share my ideas, and if it's something to give back or something to change, I don't mind. So, I think a lot of people receive me very well.

Jordan appreciated her supportive school community, and took advantage of additional leadership opportunities including a role on a committee leading the school toward Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) certification.

The Georgia STEM certification program was a 5-year renewable certification developed by the state in response to local business and industries calls for increased preparation of students in the STEM fields. Designed to encourage schools to expose students to STEM fields, the certification program included models that offered all students within a school (elementary, middle, or high) access to the STEM curriculum or that exposed a select group of students. A state-selected STEM team evaluated schools on 15 rigorous criteria in order to award STEM certification, and at the time less than 20 schools had earned STEM certification. Jordan explained, “We're going in the STEM direction as a cluster, all the schools in this cluster. Hopefully, we will make it, and I think that'll be a good experience for the students too.” Excitement over STEM activities was palpable when I visited Jordan’s school for my full day observation. It was the day of the first school-wide engineering design build activity, and all of the students in the school were participating in the event.

Jordan’s classroom was organized with desks in groups of four with one small table where three students worked together and two desks that were situated separately. One large window was decorated with purple curtains with owl trim, and floor pillows with the same owl pattern were on the rug for students to use. Owls were on the table numbers and bulletin boards, where student work was posted. Math and science centers charts, a number line, and an ABC strip were posted, and books were displayed in the reading corner. Students had access to four

desktop computers while Jordan used a school laptop that was connected to an interactive whiteboard.

Jordan's classroom was located in an impressive octagon-shaped brick school building, barely ten years old and standing in stark contrast to the impoverished homes that surrounded it and completely encompassed by a tall brick and wrought-iron fence. Named after a prominent African-American educator, the school was originally founded in 1964. The original building was demolished and rebuilt into the current state-of-the-art facility, a two-story building surrounding a courtyard that held a large amphitheater and green space with a few trees and grass. The white-tiled hallways of the school gleamed, and the walls were decorated with colorful, well-maintained bulletin boards of students' work and drawings of important moments in African American history. The award-winning Title I school was located within one of the poorest and most challenged zip codes in the city, an area mentioned regularly in local news reports covering gang activity, illegal drug use, and homelessness. While immediately surrounded by urban blight, abandoned and boarded-up houses and apartment buildings, the school was also located near historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and the $1.4 billion Atlanta stadium that was under construction, providing opportunities for access to unique and valuable community resources.

The school where Jordan worked was made up of 600 students, 100% of whom participated in the state's free and reduced lunch program and 60% of whom lived in single-parent homes. Forty teachers served the student population that was 99% African American with 6% receiving gifted services and 10% receiving special education services. The school was supported by numerous corporate and community partners, and students benefited from a STEM focus that included arts integration as well as an emphasis on health and wellness.

Nomination and Recruitment to Study

UACM faculty members who nominated Jordan echoed thoughts revealing their observations of her effectiveness as a teacher of diverse students. One person wrote the following comment about Jordan,

> She is a strong instructional planner and has implemented interesting and creative lessons that connect well to the children's lives. She has helped children that had been extreme discipline problems in earlier grades to learn and practice habits that made them effective students. She knows how to fill each child's emotional bank, so that they are motivated to work hard to learn.

Faculty members also noted Jordan's warmth, professionalism, and sense of humor while teaching. "She engages in responsive practices and is very invested with the students and the school community," noted another. Jordan's high expectations for her students and herself were reflected also,

> Jordan's gift as a teacher was her classroom organization where she taught her students to become self-learners. She chose not to give her students all the answers but rather to assist them in becoming self-learners. Jordan's classroom routines and procedures drove the success of her classroom.

Jordan's principal agreed with the UACM faculty nominations. In fact, when she first became aware of the topic of my research, she suggested Jordan as a potential participant.

Due to the timing of the IRB approval from the school district in which Jordan taught, I was not able to invite her to participate in the study until the end of April 2015. I met with Jordan eight times between May 1 and May 28, 2015 for five personal and focus group interviews and three observations. The observations included one full-day classroom visit and two self-selected events: a) a nature center onsite visit and b) a Girl Scout meeting. In addition, Jordan responded to emails and met with me one additional time for clarification and member checking.

Advocacy = More Than a Teacher + Teaching the Whole Child with the Future in Mind

"I don't think people realize how much teachers do," stated Jordan, explaining that her vision for her work as a teacher included multiple aspects. She explained how her own upbringing influenced her perspective,

> I think about my experience growing up and what my parents gave me, and a teacher is not just a teacher. She is a mom, she is a counselor, she is anything, a doctor sometimes, so I kind of think about what my mom gave to me and I try to do the same, because of my experience in school and growing up. I try to give them those same experiences.

Jordan traced the origins of her vision of being "more than a teacher" back to her childhood experiences and her undergraduate education, but she admitted that her vision had expanded to include understandings about the unique needs of students in urban settings. She explained,

> My vision has gotten better from where I started at [HBCU NAME] in that urban education class. I think it keeps moving up, and up, and up, especially having gone through UACM. You know, to have a program like UACM where you see there's a need for teachers who think about the whole child and the urban setting. These are all of the things that go into having an urban setting. You have to meet the needs of the kids. You're like a mom, a psychiatrist, a counselor, you know, just everything. So, it's harder than I thought it would be.

Jordan's vision for the work of a teacher included a firm belief that her responsibilities were much broader than those traditionally expected of a teacher. She devoted a great deal of time and energy to providing enriching experiences for her students outside of the school building and also within, and she collaborated with various school stakeholders for support for all of the activities she provided. She explained how providing experiences benefited her own students and other students in the school,

> I think about it as hopefully throughout the year, I give you something that sticks with you, because we're there <u>to add value.</u> So whether they were on a fieldtrip and you think, "Oh my God! I learned all this," or whether it was this math problem, or Girl Scouts or whatever it is, hopefully, you take something, and it goes along with you, and maybe builds your interest. Or maybe you do some

> more research or whatever, but I'm supposed to be there to add value to your life, whether it's academically, socially, whatever the case may be.

By enacting her vision for her role as "more than just a teacher," Jordan felt she was able to effectively know and teach each student in a holistic way, both academically and personally and with an eye toward a successful future. She enacted her vision for being "more than just a teacher" by: a) providing enriching experiences; b) collaborating with school stakeholders; and c) adding value to her students' school experiences.

Theme One: Advocating by Being "More Than Just a Teacher"

Jordan envisioned her work as a teacher advocate for her students to include wide-ranging responsibilities that included planning, coordinating, and participating in events and experiences that she determined would enrich her students' lives. She demonstrated an awareness of the need to understand and get involved in her students' community prior to entering her teacher preparation program. She wrote,

> Community is the awareness of the interdependence of people. Many have heard the quote "It takes a village to raise a child," and according to research one would believe that it truly does. When working with urban children in urban education, you tend to work with students from various different types of backgrounds, with the community playing a very large role.

Jordan continued, explaining the potential influence of community on students.

> When one thinks of community, they may think of it as a group of people helping one person reach their full potential in life. So when working with urban children, because you don't know their background, one just can't depend on the immediate family to help that child soar to the highest level possible. It takes the teacher, it takes the tutor, it takes that Sunday School teacher, and even the basketball coach to make that student shine brighter than any star in the sky.

In addition to learning about her students' community, Jordan stressed the importance of getting involved and perhaps living in the school community in order to have the greatest impact on

students. In fact, she described how participating in extracurricular activities actually strengthened her classroom community,

> I do a lot outside of the academic setting with my students, which helps me to build stronger relationships with them. So, I think a lot of them not only look at me as just a teacher, but a mentor, somebody they can talk to. I do a lot of Girl Scouts, dance teams, and work with some other programs in the school.

Jordan built relationships with students from her school who were not actually in her class though school-wide activities. In fact, after school was dismissed the day of my observation, a group of girls congregated in Jordan's classroom, waiting to talk with her. She explained,

> Well, a lot of them try to stay with me. Like today they were like, "Can we stay with you after?" I was like, "No, because I have a meeting." Just because, like I said, I have tried to not only just be a teacher to them, but somebody they can come and talk to. A lot of them will say, "Well, such and such was talking about me. Can you please talk to them?" So we'll pull them to the side. When they hear from me I think they look at it from the perspective, "She's not just my teacher. This is somebody that cares about me and who cares about where I go in life." So, that's why I think it's important for me to do what I do.

Spending time with students beyond purely academic situations built personal relationships. Jordan's efforts emerged from understandings of her students' community and their needs, and they effectively strengthened her classroom and school community. She explained how participation in dance team fostered high expectations and collaborative support for students,

> So, when they're acting up in class it's kind of like a self-check, you know? "Okay, so do you really want to be on the dance team? How can you be on the dance team if you're not doing what you're supposed to do in the classroom?" Some have been on probation. We've had meetings where, "Okay, what should we do for this individual?" and it's the girls talking. "Well, she's not doing this. Maybe we should give her one more chance," you know? So they sort of monitor themselves that way. Then we have teachers, who come and tell us about the dance team members, so it's kind of another, you know, self-check. Like I said, it's not just your teachers worried about your academics. It's kind of an additional community. Maybe I'm not your core teacher, but you know, if you're not doing what you're supposed to be doing with your classroom teacher, then how can you come to dance team? Do you need to sit out? Then we talk to the parents too, so now you're getting two teachers talking about the child and how important academics are and, you know, so they're hearing it from different people. And

> people in the school look at them differently. They hold them to a higher standard, so you know, we had one incident where a student's grades dropped off. "Okay, so you need to get your grades back up."
>
> One girl was easily angered, and so that's another self-check. And she fixed her behavior, because not being on the dance team it was just like, "Okay, I'm responsible for my actions, and when I don't [make good decisions] I get things taken away, just like if I had a job. If I don't do what I'm supposed to do it gets taken away." So dance team kind of promotes that responsibility and motivation to do what you're supposed to do for success all around, not just in the classroom.

Participation in extracurricular activities strengthened the school community and fostered motivation.

Jordan also valued extracurricular activities as enriching on their own merit. "I experienced a lot, and I just want them to have the same kind of life," she stated. She continued,

> I think [providing new experiences] is a way of advocating, because it gives them a new experience to try something different, and when it's something to add into your catalog, not only will you remember it, but also you can show your friends, teach your friends. They go home and talk about it with their families.

Students in Jordan's school had numerous opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities, and Jordan engaged in sponsoring and planning activities with the support of her administrators. "Whenever I have an idea, I share it with my principal, and she's kind of like, "Yes, if it's for the kids, yes," explained Jordan. She continued,

> Like Girls Scouts, it was the first year back after five years, and so just to give them the opportunity. We went to Savannah. Half of them haven't even left the city, so, just to give them those experiences that they might not ever get. And the field trips we take, we went to the [city name] nature center. We went to a farm. We got to see a cow get milked. They made butter. We got to see chickens, pigs, a cornfield – the corn maze. A lot of them went, "Oh, my God!" They got to pick pumpkins and bring them back, and some of the kids still have their pumpkins to this day. So it's like these are things that they won't forget, and when it's an opportunity a child may never get to do, and we're able to that, that's what I love about my school. My principal, she is an advocate for the kids, and it kind of trickles down to us.

The supportive perspective of the administrative team at Jordan's school fostered an environment conducive to extracurricular activities, and school events were continuously in planning or production stages throughout the school year.

Jordan explained how providing experiences at school fit in with her vision for her work and remained a priority for her,

> I think being able to bring things to the school is advocating, because I'm giving you a resource that you might not be able to actually go to, and it's outside of the city limits. You might not be able to go there so I'm bringing you the resource, and you get to experience something that you might not be able to get to.

One activity that Jordan organized and led on her own was dance team. She explained,

> We just started meeting every Wednesday and Friday due to the fact that they're performing at all of the awards day programs next week, so we have to practice. We do it from 3:00 to 5:00, but they perform at the events we have here. [School name] is one of our partners, so we've gone there during the holidays and danced the whole day in their lobby. It's just first through fifth grade, and we do lyrical jazz and tap dancing, and I work with them with that.

Jordan organized and supervised dance team on her own to provide girls with experiences dancing and performing, and she collaborated with other school stakeholders on other school-wide events.

Etiquette brunch. A unique school-wide faculty-sponsored event was an etiquette brunch, a fun social activity for students to learn formal table manners with their friends, and to build a community network, was an event that was typical at Jordan's school. She described her role on the planning committee for the networking brunch,

> We held a brunch called "Elevating Young Minds: Building Relationships that Inspire and Motivate." Two organizations, the Girl Scout troop here and a boys' mentoring group called The Art of Manliness, came together, and we invited guest speakers: a head football coach from [College Name], a Fellowship of Christian Athletes representative, and a local female entrepreneur who helps others who want to pursue careers in communications or broadcasting. We also had two kids from each organization come up and speak about what inspires them to do what they do and motivates them, focusing on building inspiring

> relationships outside of your parents. So, it was just a day of inspiration, motivation, telling the kids about academics, building relationships.
>
> They had to bring one of their parents with them, and we had a lot of faculty come out who weren't even on our committee, and they helped us out. We also had vendors. We had [a representative from] the Chamber of Commerce, from [city name] come out, and he set up his table, and we got a chance to socialize.
>
> We raised $2,300 for this event, and we decorated everything ourselves. We bought the boys these outfits to wear during the program, a white shirt and gold tie. Next year we're hoping to raise more money so they can actually have blazers in the school colors, because we're trying to teach them the way you dress is the way people will address you.

The network brunch also provided opportunities for the students to meet and socialize with young student leaders from two HBCUs located nearby. "I'm thinking ahead to college even in second grade," stated Jordan demonstrating a perspective of anticipatory advocacy. She explained the importance of this opportunity for students in the school,

> The focus is college and career readiness, so even though they're young, they can still see those opportunities. 'These schools are right down the street from us, so this is what you can be; this is your potential.' And coming from a group of students like this, most of them don't even see past high school, and they'll tell you that, and they'll say, 'Well, I'm not going to be anything.' 'But, yes, you are.' And so we try to bring these opportunities to our kids, instead of having to go out to get them. I think it'll stay with them for the long run, and they're building relationships that will last, and with people who truly care about what you make of yourself, so it was just a day of inspiration. So we've been charged to do it again next year, and to do it bigger and better, because, you know, it was a great success.

Jordan was involved in planning school-wide events and activities, but she also organized and on occasion headed up activities on her own.

Girl Scouts. Another organization to which Jordan made a major commitment at her school was Girl Scouts. "I grew up in Girl Scouts," explained Jordan. "Yeah, my mom was there the whole way with us, and she still is." *[Laughs]* In fact, Jordan's mom attended the year-end Girl Scout bridging ceremony, a Girl Scout ritual that symbolizes and celebrates the

advancement of girls along the ranks of the organization, Daisies, Brownies, Juniors, Cadets, and Seniors, that I attended for one of Jordan's observations. Jordan described her first year as leader of the organization,

> We started out with 60 [girls], and now we have 15. Well, 15 solid girls, and then with the ones who just come to meetings, it's about 25. But if we were doing something outside the school, it would be about 15 girls. We're probably going to revamp for next year, but this year we had Daisies, Brownies, and Juniors, so it was just a lot.

The bridging ceremony is. Jordan described how she tapped into the community to organize a special bridging ceremony for the Girl Scouts at her school,

> We have students who come over from [HBCU Name] and [HBCU Name] to help us. One of them put us in contact with her mom who is a troop leader, and she was all, 'Oh, yeah, I can come show you everything. I can be a speaker at your event.' So some of the things she was asking me before the meeting, I was like, 'I don't know what to do, but we can do it if you lead it, if you do the bridging ceremony.'

With assistance from colleagues, community members, and her family, Jordan planned for the final meeting of the year to be a special celebration where all of the Girl Scouts would receive awards, and those who were moving up to a new level would participate in the bridging ceremony.

I observed the meeting and bridging ceremony that took place in a classroom at the school after final dismissal. Student desks had been removed, and the chairs were arranged in rows facing a head table. Tables at the front and side of the room were covered with white skirts and linen tablecloths topped with decorative covers in shades of green with polka dots. A fresh flower arrangement adorned the head table, and refreshments including green velvet cupcakes and drinks were set up on one of the side tables. A formal printed program that listed the agenda and speakers along with the Girl Scout Promise and Law and the names of the principal and troop leaders was presented to each person who attended the event.

More than 40 people filled the room as the meeting began, with about half of them being adult guests, mostly women. The Girl Scouts, wearing matching t-shirts emblazoned with "Make a Change," were sprinkled throughout the crowd, seated next to family members, and the afterschool preschool class and their teacher made up the rest of the crowd, sitting in remaining chairs and on the floor in the center aisle.

After Jordan set up the computer and PowerPoint presentation, she began the ceremony announcing that before the awards would be presented, everyone should stand and recite the Girl Scout Promise and Law. Jordan led the recitation, noting that their troop has been following those words already and introducing the special guest speaker, a Girl Scout leader from the metro Atlanta area.

The guest speaker delivered an inspirational speech, encouraging the girls to continue to participate in Girl Scouts. She explained that her own daughter had participated in Girl Scouts through high school graduation, and that she had became a Bonner Scholar, recipient of a service-learning scholarship, at a prestigious HBCU for women.

Following the speech, Jordan introduced the Brownie and Daisy leaders who would present awards and participation certificates to the younger girls. Family members continued to trickle into the room until people were standing in all of the open spaces along the walls. After the Daisy and Brownie awards were presented, Jordan explained to the group how sashes, badges, and pins were earned by Juniors, the older girls' group, adding that she would be presenting gifts to the girls who had attended every event during the year. Jordan presented the awards and gift, a headband with ribbons and bows in Girl Scout colors, to the girls in her troop. "I know you already have this headband," Jordan said to one student. "I have a different one that my sister made from Pinterest. You can have this one, or I will get you something else," Jordan

continued. The girl hesitated, not answering, and Jordan immediately said, “I’ll get you something else.”

Once the individual troop awards were presented, Jordan announced the cookie and fall product sales awards. “The troop sold $3,000 worth of cookies!” she announced to applause. “They did awesome for their first year. It was incredible, and the first year!” she continued. At the completion of the awards Jordan announced to more applause, “They’re [badges] iron-on, parents, so don’t worry about having to sew!”

After thanking the parents who helped out with activities during the year, Jordan started a video presentation that she had created that included photos of activities from throughout the year, with background music, “You Can Count on Me” by Bruno Mars. As the video ended, and Jordan thanked those in attendance, the guest speaker jumped back up the microphone to address the audience. “This group is truly exceptional, and I hope you appreciate how much has been accomplished this year,” she stated. Jordan replied, “We began with 60 girls, and the number had dwindled a lot. I hope to get the good word out to attract and keep more girls in the future.”

After engaging in bridging ceremonies for each of the groups, Jordan stood first with her fifth graders for photos before calling all of the Girl Scouts up for photos. She described how the group had facilitated a paper towel/toilet paper roll drive to collect materials needed for a STEM design build activity. “They collected thousands of rolls!” she announced proudly. “They also helped to raise $2,300 for the etiquette brunch,” she proudly told the group. “They have done so much this first year.”

As the group milled about enjoying refreshments and personal conversations, one of the troop leaders made a final announcement encouraging parents to continue to support and engage

in Girl Scouts. “You can call Jordan about any and everything if you have a question,” she announced confidently.

Jordan reflected on the event and the progress of the Girl Scout group at her school,

> We came up with those shirts ourselves. *Make a Change*. I thought that's what Girl Scouts is about: making a change, making a difference. We didn't use “difference,” because it was too long, and it didn't look right on those shirts. [Laughing] ‘”Make a Change,” not only in the community you live in, but in your life. Hopefully we're adding some value to what you're about, and what you're going to be in the future.

Jordan recalled the problem-solution project, an assignment she had completed during the master’s portion of the UACM program, “You can pick what you think needs help in the environment, and you can go for it. You can set it up. You can do it yourself,” she reflected, “of course, with a team of people, but – yeah, it most definitely connects.”

She elaborated on the value of the experience for students in her school,

> In this environment, a lot of our students receive a lot of things – donations, whatever the case may be. But now, taking it and seeing that there's a bigger picture than just where you are. So now you can help somebody else, and you can be a resource for somebody else. Giving them those experiences, as far as recycling, as far as going to Savannah, and we took the girls in our own cars, so we were also taking them to a new place, giving them a bigger picture, I think. You can help somebody else, we were saying. And so that's why I like Girl Scouts, and that's what I think Girl Scouts has shown them. You're adding value in teaching them the difference, because they may not know all there is out there, so you're giving them the scope of, “Okay, we're bigger than this.” Everything expands.

Even the experience of the awards and bridging ceremony had the potential to add value to students’ lives from Jordan’s perspective. She explained,

> Girl Scouts is going to continue next year. I think they are going to be dedicated. They were just so excited to see their students get those awards. I don't think they really knew how much we were doing, because a lot of girls didn't participate fully. And so a lot of the girls came up to me and said, “Miss _____, well, I didn't get this [badge], and I didn't’ – ‘Well, did you participate?” – ‘No.’

> So, just having that conversation, you see there's an end reward, and I think that's part of Girl Scouts, too. There is an end reward for the good things you do when you give back, so I think that'll motivate them.

Another reward that Jordan's Girl Scouts gained from participating in the group was a multi-grade community and opportunities for leadership. She explained,

> I think bringing together a group of girls in the school who can look out for each other, who aren't necessarily on the same grade is valuable – and they do, actually. It trickles down and they take care of each other.

Jordan described the impact of a climate of leadership and responsibility even within her own classroom,

> It is not only for the girls, but the environment of the school. Like I have 17 girls in my class, and they will go back and forth at each other all day, and I can reflect, "Okay, now is that how we act in Girl Scout meetings? Is that how we treat each other in Girl Scout meetings?" And it's like, "Oh, you're right. You're right." So then they'll start helping each other, and that's even the girls who aren't in Girl Scouts. They still help them. So, hopefully, not only are they getting those skills, but also it's being passed along throughout the school.

Girl Scout participation added value to Jordan's school by promoting leadership and agency not only among the members, but also within the larger school environment.

Nature center onsite visit. Jordan was instrumental in bringing an onsite nature center group to present to her grade level, bringing students face-to-face with predator birds that they had studied with a life cycles unit in science. Jordan described how the event came about,

> We're partnered with [Large Corporation Name], so they're partners with [City Name] Nature Center, and they send at least three grade levels on a field trip there for free. We just have to pay for transportation. So, I set up two field trips through them, but they paid for them, one to go to the center and the other for them to come here.
>
> We did a "Creek and Cherokee" unit when we went to the center, which is a standard that we cover. So, we went on a trail and talked about the Chattahoochee River, how they used it, and all that, and then they let us pick another subject when they come here, so I chose life cycles.

> I think it's an experience they'll take with them forever – to get to see an owl. One of our units is life cycles and how the environment they live in can affect their life cycle. We always do everything in the book, but life cycles are kind of a tricky thing for experiments. I think that was really good to see it, just to bring it to life for them.

Jordan organized offsite and onsite field trips to support second-grade curriculum standards, providing her students with background knowledge and hands-on experiences.

I observed the nature center onsite visit at Jordan's school as it took place in the central outdoor courtyard of the school. Four second-grade classes of 23 students each were seated on concrete amphitheater steps that led to a central stage where two conservationists presented to the group. Jordan was seated in the midst of her students, while the three other teachers were seated in chairs to the sides of their classes, clearly separate from the students.

The conservationists introduced themselves and explained that their purpose for the day was to teach the students about owls and hawks. As one conservationist showed close up photos of a hawk's talon, explaining the importance of the talon for the hawk's survival, her colleague rushed on stage to explain that the hawk's leather restraint had broken and that they would not be able to safely remove it from its traveling case. They shared pictures and other artifacts to teach about hawks and owls, and they brought a great horned owl onto the stage for the students to observe.

"Who notices the owl's eye?" asked one of the conservationists. Jordan immediately raised her hand along with the majority of the students while her colleagues sat watching without moving or grading papers. The conservationist explained that the bird had injured its eye, preventing it from being able to effectively hunt for prey and necessitating that it be adopted by the nature center. As she continued to point out and explain the features of the bird, the head

feathers and anatomy that enabled “silent flight,” an adaptation that made owls great hunters, Jordan took pictures with her phone.

The presentation continued with the conservationists answering and asking questions of the group and conducting a kinesthetic raptor activity that got the group up out of their seats and moving. Jordan participated along with the students, and when one of the presenters asked, “Did anyone learn something new today?” Jordan was the first to raise her hand. As the presentation concluded, the group filed past the artifacts to touch and get a closer look.

“I was just excited about them coming,” recalled Jordan about the nature center visit. “My classroom theme is ‘owls,’ because they are considered to be wise, and so I was excited that they were bringing an owl in to see the kids' reactions and hear all their questions.” Jordan acknowledged that she learned from the experience too. “The ‘silent flight’ part works well with my theme, too,” she added, smiling.

By striving to be “more than a teacher,” Jordan believed that she was “adding value” to her students’ lives essentially by giving them choices,

> Look, you can go to a farm. You don't just have to read about it in a book. There are so many things out there, and most of them have never even been outside the city of Atlanta, so just that experience in itself, they were like, “Oh, my goodness!” I mean they talked about it for weeks. Just, you know, real live animals, seeing the animals. “Oh, my God, that's where our milk comes from? They have to do all of that?” Because they had the machine attached [to the cows] and, you know, just seeing all of that. We had been talking about life cycles, so making the standards real, and we're not just learning in school just to know things at school.
>
> It gives them the power to take control of the direction they're going in life. You have the choice. And I always tell my kids, “You have choices to make. Once you start school, you are making the decisions to follow your path. Nobody can deter you. If you have your mind set on something, then you need to stay focused. Yes, there might be a little obstacle, but you have to figure out how to get around it. So you have the power to make the decisions in life that ultimately make you the person that you're going to be.”

Jordan enacted her vision of being "more than just a teacher" by devoting time and energy to providing a variety of experiences for her students and others inside and outside of school as part of her commitment to add value to their lives.

Resisting. Although the climate of Jordan's school was generally aligned with her perspective that a teacher's role included more than traditional academic tasks, she was aware of different teachers' priorities. She explained,

> I don't think every teacher feels that way, because some teachers do leave at 3:00 on the dot. They probably think I do too much and why is she doing that? A lot of them say, "Well, you don't have a family." But I feel like if I had a family I would probably still be doing the same thing.
>
> From meetings and just from things, [I know that] people complain about staying late all of the time when it's mandatory for us to stay late. So I feel like if it's not mandatory I know they're definitely not going to stay late, and they think you're doing too much. If it's beneficial for the kids, you know, then that's my principal's focus. "Whatever benefits the kids, that's what we're going to do." So, if I'm on the team and my heart is there, I'm not going to complain. I'm going to be here. I know that's what made me a well-rounded person, not to brag or anything, but I just think that, you know, these things are important. I just have to wonder, you know, what made you choose this profession? Because teaching is not just a 7:00 to 3:00 job. You take things home. Sometimes I don't do them when I take them home, but I still take them home.

Jordan explained that although she got along with her grade-level team, there was one situation that she would not tolerate.

> The only conflict that I can see is I don't like people who complain. So as a team member, if we're complaining about things that we have to do and that are in the best interests for our kids, that's the only time I can ever say that I've just said, "No," because I'll give my all for these babies. If somebody says this is what needs to happen, then that's what needs to happen – no complaining.

Jordan adhered to her vision for being "more than a teacher" by refusing to engage in complaining or a lack of effort from peers.

Sustaining. Jordan spent hours after dismissal on most school days enacting her vision for being "more than a teacher," whether planning or supervising extracurricular activities.

> I do it just because that's what I grew up doing. I like it because – first of all, a lot of them don't take outside dance classes, so it's an opportunity for them to take a free dance class. Let me see. It's a way for me to express myself, so I think a lot of them can do that too. That's really what I grew up doing. I was either at school or at the dance studio until 8:00 at night and it was just free time, and then getting to perform at all of these different places, and the people in the school look at you differently. It's something to add to your resume or to your list of things when you're getting ready to apply for college, or you know, whatever the case may be.

Jordan believed firmly that participating in extracurricular activities benefitted her as a student, and she sustained extensive efforts for her students by recalling the value of her own experiences.

When Jordan struggled with parental support for extracurricular activities that she had planned, she communicated with parents in an open and honest way to gain their support. She explained,

> I planned this big trip [to Savannah for Girl Scouts], and everybody was gung-ho for it, "Yes, we going to do it. Yes, we going to do it." It was a whole weekend, but nobody paid when the time it came. So I only had two students the week of the field trip to actually pay.
>
> I had to send home a note that was like, "I tried to give your student not only an academic setting, but also an experience that they can have forever," tried to make explain that it's about the whole child. Once I sent the note home, the next day everybody paid for the trip. So just kind of getting parents to understand that everything we do, not just academic, but social is important for their kids. And you don't have to have a lot of money, you don't have to do all this, just know that we're a team, so it takes a teacher, the parent, and the student. So kind of finding something that will help everybody just be on one board.
>
> The only reason we still went is because I already put out the money, and the girls who actually had put down their down payment were so excited to go. We had set up a tour with Savannah State University that's there, and the president had offered to feed us lunch. It was this whole big thing and then I had to say, "We can't do it." So it was a really quick turnaround trip. We went and came back that same day.

Although in this instance, Jordan had to reduce the planned two-day trip for an entire group to a day trip for a few girls, she determined to sustain her efforts for her students, believing that by

continuing to communicate she could educate parents about her intentions and win parental support.

In addition to using communication to foster support, Jordan felt that "seeing was believing" for parents and for her colleagues. "Now that parents and students are really seeing what Girl Scouts is all about, I know next time will be better," she stated. She also noted that the onsite nature center visit had drawn attention from her colleagues,

> Some teachers have already come to me and asked, "Who was that? Who was in the courtyard when we were out there?" I told them, and they said, "Oh, we're going to do that next year."

Administrative and grade-level support encouraged Jordan to continue her efforts to be "more than just a teacher" as she provided extracurricular activities. She explained,

> We've kind of pre-planned based on what we've done, and the principal wants to keep some of the traditions going, like the brunch we had – that was our first. She's like, "Oh we've got to do it next year, bigger and better."

Jordan's teammates were also supportive, encouraging her to sustain her efforts. She explained,

> They always know I'm up to something, and Ms. _____ across the hall, she always has my back. She's like, "Whatever you need, I got you. I'm right there with you, because I want to do all those same things." So it's kind of a team effort. Even from other grade levels, so it's kind of just a team thing around the whole building, an atmosphere. People never tell me to not to do things, but sometimes I suggest stuff, and some people will say, "I don't know about that. I'm not going to do that in my class."

Jordan drew on a supportive environment and sustained her efforts reminding herself that she knew what she was getting into when she decided to teach in an urban environment. She emphasized the importance of realistic expectations,

> You can kind of tell the people who are not dedicated to the urban education lifestyle per se, because they'll quickly weed themselves out, and you can kind of tell that they'll come one year, two years, and then they're gone. I feel like it's a life-long dedication. It's for a long period of time. You know what you're getting into. It's an urban area. You know the population you're working with, so if it's not your passion, I think you'll fall to the wayside, without anybody even saying

> you're fired. So, that's how I feel. And I think as a teacher you have to understand, it's not 7:30 to 3:00, you know, as soon as 3:00 hits, you shouldn't be leaving out the door. You're there, helping, conferencing, tutoring, getting ready for the next day, getting ready for the next week, so, if you think it's a 7:30 to 3:00 job, then – surprise!

Drawing on her commitment to urban education, realistic expectations, and the support of her school community sustained Jordan in her efforts to be "more than a teacher."

Summary: Theme One – Advocating by Being "More than a Teacher"

Jordan envisioned her work as a teacher advocate for her students to include wide-ranging responsibilities that included planning, coordinating, and participating in events and experiences that she felt would add value to her students' lives. She explained the importance of introducing possibilities to her students,

> A lot of them come in [during lunch] and talk to me and tell me some pretty sad stories while they eat, so I think I'm trying to give them the opportunity to see what is possible, the avenues you can go down. It's not just one way, "This is the only way," but there are many ways you can go down this road, and by giving them those experiences, hopefully, they'll shake their entire mindset. When we talk about science, when we talk about the owls, I love when they question, and I love when they get into the learning, because it makes it more personable to them. So that's what I try to do. I just want them to grow socially and academically at the same time and not just show them that, "Oh, it's just about academics, it's just about academics." Because when we go to college, they don't want to just know about the academics, they want to know about everything else that you've done.

Jordan demonstrated her commitment to being "more than just a teacher" by providing extracurricular activities that added value to students' lives. She led efforts such as dance team on her own and participated with school stakeholders to provide larger school-wide events. She resisted colleagues who were not supportive by refusing to engage or listen to complaining, focusing instead on her supportive school environment and the belief that any activity that was important for the students was worth her time and attention. Her own upbringing that included a

variety of experiences and activities and the successes she saw as students, parents, and colleagues increased participation and enthusiasm, sustained her belief and commitment.

Theme Two: Advocating by Teaching the Whole Child

By striving to be "more than a teacher," Jordan engaged in planning and supervising academic and extracurricular experiences that she felt added value to her students' lives. Her work individually and in collaboration with other school stakeholders resulted in building stronger classroom and school communities, in developing positive role models and networks, and broadening students' visions of their own possibilities for the future. Springing from her desire to add to the intrinsic value children bring with them when they come to school was an awareness that children were unique and deserving of attention as individuals. "It is important to know, appreciate, and to understand different groups in order to best relate and to peacefully live and work together for a common goal," wrote Jordan in her UACM application goals statement. She continued,

> My goal on behalf of my own students is to make the learning processes of the classroom a team effort. I believe that working towards building trust and respect, the students will come to realize that they have an advocate, and will be more willing to work towards their own success. Building self-esteem, self-confidence, self-respect, and trust are key. I believe that we will be well on our way once we've established a working relationship as a caring team.

Building students up both academically and socially a priority for Jordan prior to entering her teacher preparation program, and her goal had intensified into a firm commitment that she identified as an aspect of her effectiveness as a teacher.

"My vision as a teacher is I would like to reach the whole child," she stated, reflecting on her reputation as an effective teacher for diverse learners. Jordan acknowledged that focusing on the "whole child" was a concept that she had developed over time during her postsecondary education. She explained,

> The concept of teaching the 'whole child' probably came to me either during my studies at [HBCU NAME] or at Georgia State, just because of the focus on urban education. That's when I got interested in knowing that everybody didn't grow up like me. I didn't have to worry about what I was going to eat; I didn't have to worry about what I was going to wear. I didn't have to worry about how I was going to get to school. And so some of those kids have to worry about that, and so just focusing [on the fact that] you have to be a nurturer, and you have to be able to be concerned about everything that they do, not just academics. Sometimes they might just need to step out the door and tell you what happened and talk to you.

Jordan enacted her vision for teaching the whole child by: a) building personal connections, b) teaching interpersonal skills, c) insisting on academic instruction that was rich and in reach, and d) fostering attitudes of lifelong learning with a focus on future of possibilities.

Building personal connections. Jordan reasoned that personal connections gave her the knowledge she needed to teach her students most effectively. She explained,

> A lot of my students' parents will talk to me about their life and all that, and I kind of feel that in order for me to tap into you and to actually have a connection with you, I have to know your whole being, education wise, you know, what's going on with you outside of school, what you like to do. So I think that's why I have a lot of connections with a lot of my kids in here and that's why I participate in so many after-school activities, just because when you have a connection with the student you're better able to serve them I feel.

Jordan specifically noted that personal relationships with students helped her to effectively manage difficult behavior. She explained,

> I think what kind of helps me is I make a personal connection with some of them. The ones who might have – I'm not going to say worse behavior, but their behavior needs a little bit more monitoring, I try to find some kind of personal connection, like, "You know how to do this, and this," so kind of making sure that they're always on track. So finding some kind of connection with them where they will respect you on a different level.

While the extracurricular activities Jordan planned and supported allowed her to build connections, she focused particularly on the backgrounds of the students in her classroom in order to support their needs in a holistic way. She explained,

> Academics is a strong part. That's why we go to school – you know, education. But there are so many kids who come from so many different backgrounds, so when I look at the whole child, that's what I like to focus on, making that connection with each student in my classroom. It might not always happen, but that's my goal.

Building personal relationships with her students gave her knowledge of their backgrounds and needs.

Jordan routinely collaborated with school stakeholders to provide for her students' needs as part of her intention to focus on the "whole child." She described instances when students and their families benefited from support from school and community stakeholders,

> We have a program at our school where the food bank comes out and gives free food to families. I mean boxes. Each family took home a box, or two, or three, depending on how many kids were there. Also, we have Bonner Scholars from [HBCU name] and [HBCU name] come over and they help us in the classroom, and they also help my readers who struggle. I have a lot of parent volunteers who come in, and when I see a child needs some assistance, I go talk to my counselor, the person over student support, and we get them the help that they need.

Jordan collaborated with stakeholders who provided support for her students' needs, and she extended her help to their parents as needed. She explained,

> We do a lot in the school and in the classroom for the students, and if a parent needs help with something on the computer, I bring in the parents, "This is what you need to do. This is how we do this." Most of our students don't have computers at home. The summer school application this year is on the computer, so "All right. This is what you need to do." I've even helped a mom who wanted go back to school, so I helped her sign up for school.

Jordan built personal connections with her students by getting to know them and their families and advocating for supports that she knew were needed both physically and academically.

Another way that Jordan built connections with her students was by sharing her own family with them. "My whole family comes up here," explained Jordan. "My family is just involved, and they are definitely a great support." In fact, during the course of the three observations that I conducted with Jordan, I met her mother, father, paternal grandmother, sister,

and her sister's guinea pig. Jordan's sister had made the green velvet cupcakes and the hair bands for the Girl Scout bridging ceremony, and brought her guinea pig in for a classroom visit while the students were learning about life cycles.

Jordan explained how sharing her own family supported her intention to teach "the whole child."

> My dad tries to come in once a semester to read, and he'll help my low readers. My sister is here all the time helping me, decorating. She also works with the dance team. She'll come and help teach a dance. My mom comes, so everybody knows them.
>
> My grandmother – she went to South Africa, and we sent letters. She visited an orphanage there, and the kids wrote letters to them. She brought each child a book back from South Africa, and she told us about the experience, and they had questions.

Jordan described her students as empowered by relationships they built with her family members, because the connections gave them additional perspectives and possibilities to add to their own life experiences.

> A lot of them, their first question, and it stunned me so bad – well, it hit home. It was, 'You and your mom have the same last name?' I was like, 'Yes.'
>
> You know, a lot of them do come from single-parent households. Some of them actually live with their grandparents. They're like, 'Your dad too?' They were just, 'You're Ms. _____, and you're Mr. _____?' I was just like, okay, so some of them don't see the whole family. Some of them don't have a grandma, or they don't have a dad, so when my family comes in and they see, they actually make a quick connection. They like gravitate to them and they're like, 'Tell your dad we said hi.'
>
> Then they'll sometimes call me mom. I'm like, 'I'm not your mom.' Then they go, 'Oh, I'm so sorry.' But I think it's just a sense of your safe here. It's community. I care about you. I'm concerned for you. And, I think they're empowered just by writing to [kids in] an orphanage. We looked at what an orphanage was, because some kids don't have homes, like, you know, just the world is bigger than this, than these four walls.

Building personal connections supported Jordan's vision for teaching the "whole child," because it strengthened her classroom community and enabled her to be aware of her students' needs. Also, her students were empowered by a broader understanding of people and families.

Interpersonal skills. Teaching the "whole child" included attention to interpersonal skills, and Jordan devoted time to explicitly teaching students to work effectively in groups and to manage their own choices and behavior.

> I like to bring in things that the students kind of connect with already, either whether it's from the environment or from their community – kind of bring things on their level. We always have group discussions, such as morning meetings, which I was taught when I was in the UACM program, kind of just, 'How are your days going?' We're just having a normal conversation. Also, collaborative work – being a team and making sure we go through those social rules— 'This is what we should do; this how we should ask questions; this is how you act in different settings.' So I just make sure I do those things with them.

Working effectively in a group is a foundational skill for the STEM engineering design projects that Jordan encouraged in her school community. As I observed her preparing her class for a school-wide engineering design activity, Jordan began the day by giving her students a writing prompt, "What does it mean to work together?" Students were tasked with writing ideas on their own papers and then drawing pictures to illustrate their ideas.

Jordan circulated through the room asking questions to spark ideas. "How do you work in a group? What are some issues in your reading groups? How can you use the people in your group? How should you talk to each other in groups? Based on feedback from the students' writing and drawings, Jordan created an anchor chart titled, "Working Together." She listed: 1) Help each other, 2) Be respectful, 3) Share materials and responsibilities, 4) Clean up after you are done, 5) Positive attitude. The "Working Together" anchor chart remained up during the engineering design task, and Jordan referred back to the list as the groups worked together and as they evaluated themselves at the end of the task on their cooperative work.

"I think it's very important," emphasized Jordan referring to instruction on working in a group, "because you're always going to work with people." She continued,

> With other design challenges that we have done this has been a real issue. So it will be like, 'Well, we didn't get to finish, because such and such,' you know? So I just wanted to be, 'Okay, this is your checklist. Are you actually working together with somebody to complete it?' They actually do good when they're in their reading groups, when they help each other, but it seems like any time it's something hands-on instead of actually working as a team it's a problem. This is a piece that I know we really needed to work on.

Learning to work as a group was important to Jordan's vision of teaching the "whole child." She explained,

> Hopefully it's a skill they take, because you're always going to work with people no matter what you're doing, and so I try to show that to them, even though they're here. I say, 'Well, I have to listen to [Principal's Name] and, you know, as far as levels [of authority] and everything, you always have to work together.

Teaching her students to work effectively with others and in groups could benefit her students even as adults.

In addition to teaching collaboration skills as part of her commitment to the "whole child," Jordan used responsive classroom management strategies to teach her students self-control. She discussed the power of classroom community to support students' success.

> That goes back to high expectations and classroom management. We're not going to be learning until you set the tone for them, because you have to practice those routines and rituals and respect when you have those rules. It just goes back to community.

Jordan explained how the concept of community encouraged her students to control their own behavior,

> You are affecting somebody else, no matter where you are. We're in a classroom full of 23 kids, so if I have to get on you for doing something, then they're not getting what they need. So kind of that [idea that we are] working together, we're all here for the same purpose. I really like them to self-reflect, and they kind of take care of each other like a family. I do that just because a lot of our kids come from so many different backgrounds, not only social but economical, so not

> saying that they don't get it at home, but trying to show them something in a different setting, a different environment than would be at home.

Jordan built a classroom community that could support her students' self-management.

While classroom community was one key to teaching her students self-management, Jordan also considered her own role to be instrumental. "Warm demander," she stated. "Show that you care, but also, not demanding, but you have your boundary. You're like this is the limit that you have. I would consider myself to do that." She elaborated on her approach,

> I think I get on my kids kind of like if they were my own. Because sometimes I've said, 'Now, if your parent was here, how would you act?' and 'You're not my child, so I can't do what to you what your parent…' you know, because I've had parents call me like, 'Just take them into a corner and whoop them, Miss _____.' I was like, 'I can't do that. We're at the Georgia Aquarium.' I was like, 'No,' and she said, 'Well, I'm on my way.'
>
> But I'm really strict on them about behavior and I tell them from the beginning, 'Your behavior when somebody sees you, it kind of determines what they think about you, and you want people to have positive thoughts about you.' So they always do a self-check, and then sometimes when there's a kid misbehaving, they observe them, and they'll come back and say, 'Miss _____, did you see them?' and I say, 'Yeah, you know, their behavior wasn't good. So what do you think?' 'Oh, man, I'm going to be really good.'

Jordan taught her students explicitly to reflect on their behavior, to observe others, and to make self-corrections. "I try not to reprimand them," she explained, "but ask them questions – 'Are you doing this correctly?' And they'll kind of respond and self-check, 'No, I'm not.' Allowing her students to correct their own behavior was a strategy Jordan used to teach self-control.

As I observed Jordan's classroom I recognized several occasions when she asked students questions about their behavior, effectively giving them power to direct their own actions. "Let me see who I can compliment. What am I going to tell you? Is this a third-grade line? Check yourself. Are you doing the right thing?" Jordan explained why asking questions of her students was effective for management,

> I think it contributes because they have a reminder. They do a self-check, and so you could kind of see them self-check. Or I'll compliment somebody and they'll say, "Oh, well, let me fix myself," and they'll change how they're behaving, and then kind of just having that discussion.

Another method that Jordan used to motivate her students to reflect on and adjust their behavior was by giving table rewards. She described how she used table rewards to promote community self-management,

> I give table rewards randomly. Like if a table is doing really, really awesome then I'll do it, and I kind of like to do it when I see the class is kind of losing focus. "Oh, let me see what table," and then they'll try to help each other instead of saying one person is doing it. When you focus on the table they'll say, "Oh, put this up, _____." So, they check each other instead of me saying, "You're not doing this. You're not doing that." So it's random, and it goes back to that self-control thing.

While Jordan employed strategies to encourage self-correction, there were occasions when students were not able to control their own behavior, and she needed to contact parents to ask them to get involved. "If I call your name one more time, I will call your mom, and she will definitely be here," Jordan said to one student during my observation. She explained how she warned students first, and then notified parents of management problems,

> You're in control. It's you. So, I even tell them, "I really don't want to call your parent, because I know you know how to behave." I tell them all the time, and I call the parents and say, "I am so sorry to bother you. I really hate to call you, but…." It may be simple things, but if you don't fix the simple things they can escalate to something bigger.

Jordan described her approach to working with students and parents as partners in her commitment to teaching students self-control,

> The parents are actually very welcoming, because I rarely call. I am a teacher who feels like if I have to call you for little things, like she kept talking, or she kept doing – it's not going to get anywhere, because the student is going to feel like, "Oh, she's just going to call my mom," and then she has no control over what I do in the classroom, but you're in this classroom. I'm here to protect you, and keep you safe, and teach you. So at some point you have to have some respect for me. Then if it just becomes too much, then I'll call your parent, but most of the time

> they're like, "Oh, Ms. _____, I'm so sorry." You know, you have to go through that and I've gotten letters from students the next day. Parents will come in and ask if they can have a conference, so things like that. Then we'll start a star sheet. Some of them will have star sheets where they check their goals every 30 minutes to see how they did, but the parents– they work with you. I have to say that.

Jordan used responsive classroom management strategies to build her students' abilities to reflect and self-correct their own behavior, skills she felt were integral to teaching children as individuals. While she insisted on appropriate behavior for the orderly operation of her classroom, she also discussed a much broader vision for the importance of teaching her students self-control,

> You need to be self-checking yourself, because you might not always have somebody who's telling you what to do or who's trying to direct you in the right way. But as an individual you need to know what's right and wrong and you need to be able to say, "Okay." Most of them, they know that it's wrong, so why am I doing it? Who am I affecting around me?

When Jordan needed to correct a student multiple times for rocking a desk chair back on two legs, she said, "I won't have you endangering someone else's life, because you don't have self-control!" later she explained,

> It's just a distraction for a lot of them, the way they sit in their chair. We've adopted PBIS, which is "Positive Behavior Interventions," and the three rules are: be respectful, be responsible, and be safe. So I ask, "Are you being safe? Are you being safe," because I did have a student one time who actually fell in the chair and who got hurt really bad, and they were in here, and so, "Are you being safe? Make sure the person beside you is being safe."
>
> Just because of their environment, I want them to be aware of what's going on in their neighborhood. We're in an urban setting. There have been a lot of things going on. Like last year, there was a man who was picking up kids around here, so you know, it is going to benefit them outside of the school, so taking it outside of the school.

Jordan was continually connecting behavior choices to potential consequences in an effort to teach management skills that would benefit her students inside and outside of the classroom. She elaborated on the impact of her instruction to build interpersonal skills on her students,

> It's not only that you're teaching [them] how to work in a classroom, but these are lifelong things. You're going to always work with people. You're going to have to learn how to respect – So it just goes back to the whole child. Rules are not just for the classroom. There are rules everywhere you go. So it may start here, these are the rules, but hopefully, I'm teaching you that this is going to follow you, and you just can't break rules. And it's self, self-check, self-awareness, what am I doing, what's going on? How you act affects the rest of your life. Yes, it does.

Self-management and effective collaboration were interpersonal skills that Jordan practiced with her students as she advocated by teaching "the whole child." While the skills supported her students as elementary students, Jordan also viewed them as vital for their lives outside of the school building as well as into their adult futures.

Providing academic instruction that is rich and in reach. Jordan envisioned her work as an advocate to include a commitment to teaching the "whole child," and this required her attention to each student as an individual and as a member of the classroom community. Another dimension of the "whole child" included academic performance, and Jordan insisted on rich academic instruction that was appropriate for each individual student, and she took responsibility for making sure that her students had the appropriate materials and supports.

Jordan explained the role of STEM activities in her students' academic lives,

> I think it's very important now, and when we do STEM activities in math, sometimes we skip over science in the classroom as far as time constraints, because reading is so long and math, they have to get those. It kind of gets pushed to the side. So I think them being able to experience those different subjects, because those are, you know, possible career paths for some of them to take and subjects for them to study once they get in high school and college.

Not only did Jordan view rich hands-on learning experiences as important for academic performance, but also she recognized the value of this kind of learning for developing problem solving capabilities. Following the school wide STEM design build activity, Jordan reflected,

> They can really explore and see how it is. What you're learning in class is not we're just teaching you to teach you, but, "Okay, you can use this ruler to measure something that you're actually building to improve on, something to

> solve a problem." So, actually taking what they learned in class and making it fit real world, so I think that's a big part of that, and I think they kind of see the connection. We are trying to be a STEM school, so once we do that I think a lot will change within. We've always had [design build] challenges, but [until this] STEM day I had never really taken a project outside of the class. Today we went outside to measure and test, but usually it's always in here, but to actually go out and then some of them got to check their work and say, "Oh, my gosh, it didn't work." So just doing that, we never got to actually fully test the project [before].

Opportunities to engage in high-level thinking activities and authentic tasks were foundational to the academic experience that Jordan desired for her students.

To support students' success with the high-level, hands-on experiences that she provided, Jordan attended to providing materials and supports that her students needed. She recalled,

> Well, I make sure that they have the supplies we need. I remember once I didn't have a class set of Social Studies books, and I was like, "We need them. The kids love them. They're engaged, and we need them." And I got Social Studies books. So, I'm trying to make sure that they have the right resources that they need. When my computers are down, they come in and fix them. We needed dictionaries. We didn't have any dictionaries. We asked our principal and she had a connection. She was like, "I got you all. Just don't worry about it." A church donated dictionaries to all the second-grade classrooms. So the church came, and we sat in the lobby, and they gave each child their own dictionary, and they're back there in our bookshelf now. So, just making sure that they have the right resources, especially for science experiments, math manipulatives, whatever will help the students. You try to give them [what they need for] the best way that they learn.

Securing materials for instruction was a task that Jordan took on to support her students' academic success, and she also engaged in tutoring as part of a mandatory school requirement and on her own initiative and time. She explained,

> I have some [students] who don't get all the one-on-one time that they need, so we do afterschool tutorial that's mandatory [for teachers on] Wednesdays. And I even offer my services outside of our Wednesday tutorial for students to stay with me. I offer my schedule to parents, because I'm normally here till 6:00. I'll tell them that I think their child needs it, and they'll tell me what day works best for them. Even if I need to take them to the Boys and Girls Club where they were supposed to go after school, drop them off at home, things like that, I'll do it. I provide transportation, because, of course they can learn at home, but as far as school, I'm their fulltime teacher. So if I give my extra time to you to help you with what I

> know you're struggling with as far as the standards, then I feel like I'm advocating for you and doing the best that I can do for you to get you to that next level. So you're not at home playing around or whatever. I know we could be here doing some work, and then you go home, and you do some more work.

Jordan provided high-level, meaningful instruction to enrich her students' academic lives, and she devoted time and energy to securing materials and offering tutoring to support students as necessary.

Fostering lifelong learning. Another aspect of teaching the "whole child" that Jordan attended to was an emphasis on lifelong learning. Jordan explained her approach to instilling an appreciation of the joy of learning in the context of the design build engineering task,

> I see myself as a co-learner, and they say that, "You always do work with us when we do something." I'm like, "Yeah. That's because I like to learn too. I've never built a sling-shot, so I'm going to go ahead and do it and test it." I had to go back and fix it, because the tube that was in the first time was too short, so you know, then I know they're watching me do it, so then they're like, "Wait a minute. Let me go back and do [that]," so I think it motivates them to see me doing it.

I observed Jordan acting as a co-learner during my full-day observation when her sister brought in her guinea pig to share with the class. Students each completed K-W-L charts as Jordan's sister walked around the room holding the animal for them to see closely and to touch. While Jordan and her sister were able to answer many of the students' questions, there were several for which they did not have answers. At the first instance, Jordan sat at the computer and began looking up answers and calling them out to the class. Jordan explained that this scene was typical in her classroom and that she also used video examples as models for her students,

> I try to teach them that I don't always know everything, so I do have to go research. So they'll come up with questions, and they're like, "Oh, we'll go research it." Just the video with the science experiment, they got to see other kids go it. So, okay, this is something that kids can do. It can be done, so I can do it, you know, kind of give them that motivation that don't just sit there and just look around. I think it plays a very important part.

I also observed Jordan participating as a co-learner with her students during the nature center onsite visit that took place in the school courtyard. Jordan raised her hand along with students several times to answer and ask questions and to respond to the conservationists. She also took pictures with her phone and participated enthusiastically in the kinesthetic raptor activity. She explained how her actions fit into her goal of fostering lifelong learning,

> I'm learning, too. I think I've seen an owl in a tree, but up close and personal? No. So this is my personal experience with an OWL in front of me, so – and like I said, I like for my kids to see me getting engaged, too, so that they are engaged, instead of me just sitting back and they're like, "Oh, well, she's not really paying attention, let me not, you know, I'll do my own thing."

Jordan demonstrated her own passion for learning for her students in order to show them the joy that they could derive from their own intellectual pursuits.

In addition to simply demonstrating the joy of learning for learning's sake, Jordan fostered a perspective of connecting learning in the present to futures skills and careers. "I call my students scientists and engineers," she explained.

> I want to put them in the mindset of – This is something you can be. I try to do that every time we're in science, just because I want them to be in the mindset of, "Okay, we're doing science. I am a scientist, so I can do this," you know, and scientists don't give up, they keep on going, they keep on trying things.

Jordan drew on the persistent nature of scientists to encourage her students when they struggle with tasks outside of science. She recalled referring back to persistence while the students were making shirts for Field Day,

> Just like today with the tie-dye. When we had to roll the shirts I said, "Now, I'm not going to help you. This is something you're going to have to do yourself." I had three kids throw their shirts on the floor and just give up. They were frustrated, and all we were doing was folding up the shirts. I was like, "You can't give up" – "But I can't do it." "It doesn't have to look like mine. This is tie-dye. Tie-dye is not perfect." So just kind of always promoting that we keep trying, keep trying. You don't have to give up.

Jordan encouraged her students to see themselves as engineers and scientists with the power to persist and achieve their goals.

Resisting. Jordan envisioned teaching from the perspective of addressing "the whole child" as advocacy for her students. She acknowledged that not all teachers had the same perspective,

> My definition of a teacher includes making sure students' home lives are right, making sure they have the needs they're supposed to have, as far as essentials, you know? That is important when you're referring students for extra support. Is that what some people's definition of a teacher is? No.

Jordan resisted being discouraged by the differences in teaching philosophies that she observed by maintaining respect for differences and navigating relationships with colleagues with skills she learned from her teacher preparation program. She recalled how the concept of "ground rules," an activity that UACM cohorts engage in during their introductory course, was helpful in maintaining her own beliefs,

> In Maymester, we started off with creating ground rules, which I felt like allowed for open conversation and respecting that everybody has their own opinion and pulling from it, and honestly, I've taken that into my teaching career as far as faculty meetings and grade-level meetings. You know, if you value everybody's opinion, maybe you can work together to come up with something. But those ground rules, they have popped everywhere, and it makes the conversation worthwhile that you're having with people. You can say it, and nobody judges you.

When situations arose that conflicted with Jordan's knowledge of her students from a "whole child" perspective, she felt comfortable to speak up. She explained,

> I like to talk to people before I jump straight to the head boss in charge. I have a friend that I go to who's one of the specialists. So I'll go to her, and I'll ask her about it. And she'll say, "Well, you know, that's a good idea." She'll take it well. So then I'll go to her. But, like I say, the community's very open here, and so whenever we have a problem or we don't feel comfortable and we go – Yeah. Things do happen, and it's, "Thank you so much for coming to me. You know what? You're not the only teacher that said something. Other teachers--." So it's very welcoming.

One occasion with the potential to conflict with Jordan's perspective involved taking Field Day participation away from students who misbehaved in P.E. Jordan explained,

> The PE coach told us to start a "no field day" list, because there were just so many kids who were misbehaving. It's a warning system, because every time – and don't ask me why – I don't know why they act so bad in PE, because I would think that would be a place they would love to go– I was like, "Oh, my, even you're acting up? Oh, my goodness." I'm like, "If you're playing now in the classroom or where you're supposed to be learning in PE, then how can we do that?" I don't like to go against what another teacher says, but we'll see what they do by Friday. They said they may not do that, but we'll see what happens.

In that instance Jordan chose to take a "wait and see" approach to her resistance, since she did not have complete understanding of the situation.

Jordan recalled that while likeminded colleagues from her school and her cohort gave her strength to resist educational approaches that failed to address the "whole child," it was the shared focus that truly inspired her,

> I think it's giving me strength, but it made me think of my principal this week that was like, "There are all these other things around us, but we have to make sure that we're staring at the right direction, which is at the kids at the end of the day." And that's UACM's focus-- this is the child, and there are all these different pieces of this "urban child" and now how are you going to, not only value what they come with, but also add to them?

Jordan resisted differences in teachers' priorities and approaches by maintaining her professionalism and aligning with likeminded colleagues who were focused on the multiple dimensions of the urban child.

Sustaining. Jordan recognized differences in other teachers' priorities and approaches, and she also realized that her commitment was significant in terms of time and energy that she devoted to her teaching. As she reviewed her capstone video project she reflected,

> I do feel like I was able to get my point across [in the capstone project], and I think it is a great picture of me in the classroom. I was looking at some of the things and it's like, "Yeah, I still do that." Like everything – the science

> experiments. A lot of teachers don't do that. From UACM I learned hands-on is better especially for the kids here. I mean you just learn so much. The manipulatives. I didn't just do the action research project just to do it. I still do that to this day, using all those strategies. Kind of just like a self-check, like, "Okay, yeah. I didn't throw it to the side." At that time, I might have been like, "Just let me just get this over with," but I really was like, "Okay, I still do that. It wasn't just in vain."

Although she felt confident that she was continuing to teach her students in ways that were most effective for her students, Jordan recognized the possibility of a teacher's resolve wearing down over time. She reflected on her colleagues, who did not participate as co-learners during the nature center onsite visit,

> They've been teaching longer than me, so I don't know – I think I still have my excitement, and not to say they don't have a passion, but I still, like, second-year in, I still have my passion. I'm excited. I'm still excited! I'm ready to go. I hope that won't ever go away for me. I can always go back to my DVD [capstone project] that we watched at the beginning. You know I have those artifacts that I can go back to, like, "What was my purpose? What was my reason for doing this?" So, no, I hope not. I don't see it any time soon going away.

In contrast to colleagues who did not demonstrate the same enthusiasm that she felt for learning, Jordan found inspiration from members of her cohort. "It's good to come back to see who is still around and just see who's still doing what they were dedicated to do at the very beginning of the program," she stated. "That is motivation for us." Recalling her initial commitment to teaching inspired Jordan to continue her work advocating for "the whole child."

A true understanding of the nature of "the whole child" was also important to Jordan's stamina, because it gave her realistic expectations for her students' performance. She recalled the challenges that an interrupted and busy schedule created for her students,

> I try to bring hands-on activities, but they're not used to doing it all day. I know they were excited, and just trying to keep them on track when we did transition like into the reading element, because I hadn't been in the class all week. Then with the guinea pig, coming in to the class it was a very busy day trying to make everything hands-on, but trying to put some learning with it. Normally I do recess when I see the kids are– not out of control, but you know – they need a break,

> yeah, and I need a break, so we will go out and just take a little brain break. We either go right there and play with the chalk. I have chalk and they'll draw or whatever, or we'll go to the playground.

Jordan knew when her students were stretched beyond their abilities to cope with schedule changes and new activities, and she accommodated their developmental levels by being understanding and providing down time.

Having realistic expectations was also useful for Jordan as she struggled with differences in her classes. She explained,

> For me it was just realizing that every class is not the same. Each group of students is going to be different. You have students with more socioeconomic issues, parent involvement, so just kind of focusing in on that part which is a whole other piece to the puzzle. That was a hard part for me, but I wouldn't change my procedures or anything like that, but just knowing you might not always have all parents involved, like my first year was awesome. Parents came every day, they brought stuff, everybody paid for their field trips, so I didn't have to stress about those things, but that was the added piece this year.

Expecting that students and classes would bring different strengths and challenges with them each year allowed Jordan to be flexible and open-minded with the ways she enacted her vision for her work.

Finally, Jordan admitted that even though she was committed to advocating by teaching "the whole child" and that having realistic expectations for her students helped her to sustain her commitment, positive responses she received from school stakeholders added additional encouragement.

> And, then, not only knowing that you're making a difference, but other people outside are coming to you and telling you, "Oh my god, that was so great!" Not saying that I want praise, but when somebody else comes and just says, "That was so awesome. You need to do that again." You know what I'm saying? So it's like, "Okay, I'm doing something here."

Affirmation of the results of her advocacy for "the whole child" encouraged Jordan to continue her commitment to her students.

Summary: Theme two – Advocating by Teaching "the Whole Child"

Jordan committed to teaching "the whole child," and she described the need for such an approach,

> I think there is something to celebrate in each child, and they come with so much baggage already, and especially at a young age, that you want to pull out the positive aspects and not necessarily focus on the negative, even though that's always going to pop out somewhere from behavior to social connections, but you kind of want to turn that into a positive and be positive about it.

Jordan enacted her vision for teaching the whole child by: a) building personal connections, b) teaching interpersonal skills, c) insisting on academic instruction that was rich and in reach, and d) fostering attitudes of lifelong learning. She resisted differences of approach that she observed among her colleagues by using strategies for professional communication she learned from the UACM program and by aligning with likeminded administrators and cohort members to focus on practices that were best for her students. Additionally, she sustained her commitment by recalling her initial commitment to teaching, by maintaining realistic expectations for her students' abilities and for shifting strengths and challenges inherent to different classes, and by drawing encouragement from positive recognition for her efforts.

Conclusion

Jordan came to teaching with a desire to be a change agent for her students. She explained,

> That's why I wanted to do an urban education program because I did want to go in and help make changes, not just in the educational system, but in the classroom with the kids, on a smaller level, not necessarily making these drastic laws. When you do it on a smaller level, it will grow, and more people will join in the change movement. So, yeah. That's why I came, and I'm very passionate, even if it's just one child. Did I reach them? Because I always have one child in my class that I try to really, not to fix, but to make them better than what they were before they came, to adopt them for the school year in a sense.

Her vision for her work as a teacher advocate included an assumption that her responsibilities were much broader than those traditionally expected of a teacher. In fact, she determined to be "more than a teacher," devoting a great deal of time and energy to providing enriching experiences for her students outside of the school building and also within, and she collaborated with various school stakeholders for support for all of the activities she provided.

Jordan's advocacy also included a commitment to teaching "the whole child" by building personal connections, honing interpersonal skills, and providing high-level academic instruction along with necessary supports. Jordan recognized that the level of dedication necessary to resist obstacles and to sustain momentum was significant and exceptional among teachers. She argued,

> Some people are born to be in this line. You're born to work with people, and this is just your natural thing. You have a passion; you love to work with kids; you love to help. So I feel like you'll weed the people out for whom really, this was just a trial and error or you know something they were just trying out.

"This is a commitment that you make to yourself," recalled Jordan. "That's why I wanted to be in the classroom." Jordan's vision was immutable, giving her the stamina to advocate for her students beyond her classroom.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men.
Frederick Douglas

I embarked on a research journey with four teachers, Susie, Michelle, Lola, and Jordan, in an effort to understand how they envisioned, enacted, and sustained their work as advocates for their diverse students, and how they resisted professional weathering forces that have the potential to wear down teachers' ideals for their practice. My participants were all prepared as teachers in the same cohort within the Urban Accelerated Certification and Master's Program (UACM), a teacher preparation program grounded in tenets of culturally relevant pedagogy. While their identical preparation experience might bring to mind the possibility of cookie-cutter teacher professionals, my findings indicated quite the opposite. My participants revealed a uniqueness of perspective that was intriguing, emerging from their own backgrounds and experiences related to family and upbringing, experiences in school and work, and their current school contexts. As I observed and talked with my participants over the course of a year, I grew to appreciate the different ways that they enacted their visions for their work and to see how they had created classroom communities and settled in to their school contexts with their individuality intact.

While their varied perspectives and their individual personalities were delightfully unique, Susie, Michelle, Lola, and Jordan shared some characteristics prior to their participation in their teacher preparation program that proved to be salient to their effective work as advocates for their students. First, each of the teachers held core beliefs that were clearly revealed in their UACM program application and interview documents. These young women came to teaching believing that all children had potential for successful futures, that a positive classroom

community was important for children's academic success, and that children, particularly in high-need urban schools, faced unfair challenges from negative stereotypes and low expectations. Those core beliefs aligned with the theory of culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1994), the theoretical foundation of the UACM program and were requisite to their acceptance in the program in the first place. Second, each of the participants expressed a very clear and consistent commitment to teaching diverse students in urban high-need schools, again a requirement for acceptance into the UACM program. Although the UACM program admissions process was designed to admit only candidates with a strong commitment to high-need urban schools, my participants recognized that there were those in their cohort whose motives were different from their own. Michelle recalled,

> Everyone didn't want to work in an urban school. They saw that as a way to get their degree and move on, so those situations are the ones I didn't respect, because someone else could have used the space that actually wanted to be there.

The commitment of my participants to urban children and schools was intense and consistent from their initial entry into the program despite the fact that the initial screening process allowed admission of less committed candidates occasionally (Haberman, 2005; Truscott & Stenhouse, 2015).

In addition to similarities in the beliefs they held prior to becoming teachers, my participants all credited their preparation within the UACM program for strengthening their core beliefs. While they recognized that their core beliefs had not changed throughout their preparation and first years of teaching, the teachers reflected that their early understandings about teaching were "idealistic" and "shallow." They emphasized the role of the program in helping them to solidify and focus their early visions for teaching into purposeful endeavors. "It just comes down to the culturally relevant pedagogy aspect of the program," stated Lola. "It gave

me the tools to make my vision permanent," she recalled. In fact, my findings reveal that for these four teachers, the strength of their visions not only guided their actions in ways that produced success for them and for their students, but also served as a powerful defense mechanism that shielded them from professional weathering forces, protecting and further strengthening their core beliefs (Hammerness, 2006). In effect, their visions for advocacy developed into a force akin to a superpower, producing positive results that in turn protected the teachers from potentially destructive influences.

Anticipatory Advocacy: Vision and Defense

Although all of my participants expressed their visions for advocacy through their own personal lenses of personality and experience, they were consistent in describing visions for their work that emerged from a deep and reverential awareness of the humanity of the children with whom they worked. Recognizing that their students were human beings was the foundation of core beliefs that guided their advocacy: a) All children were "people in the making;" b) All children brought value and were capable of success; and c) Teachers were powerful influences, and their influences impacted students' lives for better or for worse. The teachers demonstrated these core beliefs by treating their students with kindness and empathy and by enacting a vision of anticipatory advocacy, that is demonstrations of advocacy that have implications beyond boundaries of time and space in an effort to positively influence students' lives in the immediate as well as distant future. This vision aligns with Ladson-Billings (2001, p. 121) argument regarding effective teachers. She stated, "Culturally relevant teachers are people who take the long view. The students in their classrooms are important for who they are and for who they can be."

By recognizing their students as "people in the making," the teachers maintained a future-oriented perspective focused on the fact that the children would become adults, and that as adults, they would retain significant memories of their elementary school experience, and that they would maintain perspectives and beliefs they gained during those years related to themselves and to the world. The teachers cared deeply about the development of their students' self-esteem, their attitudes toward learning, and their abilities to interact successfully with others, and this caring led to a desire to be "more than just a teacher" for their students. The teachers provided physical and emotional support for each of their own students and often for other students within the school, an "all-encompassing" commitment that set them apart, in some cases, from their colleagues.

Added to their awareness that their students would one day become adults was the core belief that each child came to school as a "whole child," bringing intrinsic value as well as the potential for achieving success. Jordan explained her future-oriented perspective, "I'm thinking about college even in second grade." Each of the teachers expressed high expectations such as Jordan's for their students. Furthermore, the unwavering belief that their students could be successful in both their immediate circumstances and into the future inspired them to advocate as teachers in ways that took them across traditional classroom boundaries. Advocacy included acting as guardians when the teachers critically examined and fought to erase negative labels given to their students and even to their entire classes, when they modeled and fostered a love for and commitment to lifelong learning, and when they taught skills important for life related to such things as health, wellness, safety, interpersonal relations, and emotional wellbeing. Supporting intellectual growth and academic achievement through culturally relevant practices including ambitious teaching strategies protected their students from negative labels and low

expectations from without and low self-esteem from within even as it prepared them for adulthood as independent and critical thinkers.

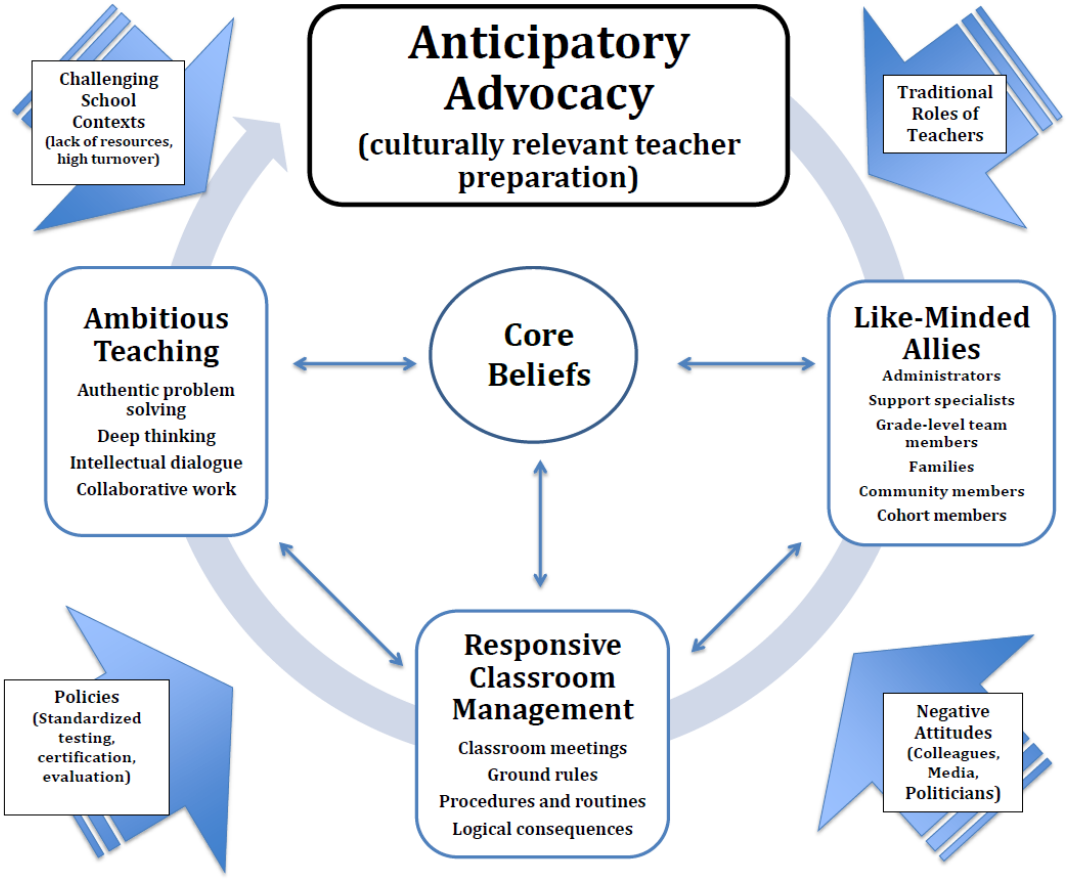
Underlying their core beliefs related to the humanity and potential of their students was a pervasive awareness of the power they wielded as teachers to influence outcomes for "little people" and the prospect that they would indeed influence their students either in positive or negative ways. With emotions ranging from wonder and awe to humility and deep respect for the heavy responsibility they bore, the teachers considered and acted on behalf of their students in efforts intended to build their self-confidence, to open their minds to possibilities for their futures, and to instill hope and agency within them. "Part of seeing students both as they are and how they can be involves maintaining a vision of how students' lives are integrally linked with the teacher," explained Ladson-Billings (2001, p. 122). She continued,

> The notion that student learning is unconnected to the teacher is prevalent in classrooms where students are failing. The stance of culturally relevant teachers is that what happens to students ultimately happens to me. If students fail and are unable to be productive in society, then the cause of justice is not served. This means that quality of life is diminished for everyone. Culturally relevant teachers' stakes in the society require an investment in the students' futures because it is the best way to ensure their own future.

In anticipation of the fact that their students would become adults, and that their own work as teachers would certainly be positive or negative influences on their students' potentially successful futures, the teachers employed tools to advocate for their students including strategies related to: a) culturally responsive classroom management, b) ambitious teaching, and c) network of like-minded allies. These tools that they had honed or acquired during their preparation program were consistent with their visions for their work, a perspective of culturally relevant pedagogy that produced expanding layers of success for the teachers and the students that in turn reinforced the teachers' visions and gave them the power to resist professional weathering forces.

The vision of anticipatory advocacy, the tools the teachers used to enact anticipatory advocacy, and the resulting synergy that serves to protect the teachers from professional weathering is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1
ANTICIPATORY ADVOCACY



Responsive Classroom Management: "Learning to be Human"

Prior to entering the UACM program the teachers expressed visions for their classrooms as learning communities where children could grow academically as well as socially and emotionally. They expected to teach their students strategies for successful teamwork, life skills, and effective communication, and they described their classrooms as communities where

children could build their identities in positive ways even as they learned the value and responsibility of interdependence. In fact, responsive classroom management was a strong underlying theme that emerged early during data collection within the teacher participants' work. Their belief was that elementary school children were "learning to be human" and that they as teachers had a role and a responsibility that constituted a privilege, to participate as advocates in that process for each student with whom they had contact.

Although the term *classroom management* is often used to refer to behavior management, the teachers in this study used the term in reference to a range of activities intended to establish productive learning environments as well as to positively influence student attitudes and behavior (Martin et al., 2016). Ladson-Billings (1994) argued that effective teachers in urban contexts must act as *coaches* who encourage growth in their students rather than as *custodians*, who merely supervise and correct their students. The teachers attended closely to each of their students using a culturally responsive classroom management approach described by Weinstein, Curran, & Tomlinson-Clarke (2003) as six tasks necessary for managing a productive classroom: a) creating a space that supports social and academic growth; b) setting rules for behavior; c) communicating so that children can understand what is required of them; d) fostering a caring classroom community; e) engaging with families; and f) using effective behavior interventions. The authors argue that a culturally responsive approach necessitates that teachers approach those tasks with an awareness of "the self," "the other," and "the context." In fact, the teachers in my study devoted time and energy into building classroom communities and relationships with each of their students and organizing their materials and time in ways that scaffolded their students' autonomy for learning and took into consideration their developmental capabilities. Creating ground rules as classroom communities and then being consistent and connecting logical

consequences with misbehavior were also important strategies the teachers used to promote student agency.

The teachers' implementation of the management tools was strikingly similar, as was the vocabulary they used to communicate the management concepts with their students. All of the teachers regularly conducted morning meetings, attended purposefully to the classroom community, enforced class-created ground rules, and communicated clearly and consistently logical consequences for misbehavior. The close relationships that the teachers had with their students were evident, and the benefits for the students and teachers were also apparent. Their caring classroom communities provided structures of trust and safety that gave their students supports they needed to fully engage, to take risks, and to grow academically as well as socially. In turn, the academic and social growth of their students challenged previously held negative beliefs and labels and protected them from additional negative experiences at school. Finally, academic and social growth led to increased agency, confidence, and self-esteem for the teachers' students.

Advocating for their students by using responsive management tools also benefited the teachers. Their strong classroom communities acted as extra supports for their students, essentially taking on some of the responsibility of management as the children were able to self-correct and work with a level of autonomy. The generally smooth operation of the classrooms allowed the teachers to devote more time and energy to cooperative, high-level learning activities that led, in turn, to positive recognition on occasion from colleagues and generally from administrators. Perhaps the greatest benefit for the teachers was the knowledge that their students were progressing academically and socially, and their own efforts as teachers had the potential to improve their students' futures.

The teachers recognized that not all of their colleagues agreed with or appreciated their commitment to anticipatory advocacy through the use of culturally responsive classroom management. At times they found themselves in opposition to colleagues who accused them of being "soft on kids," who viewed students with low expectations, or who simply ignored their extra efforts to advocate for their students and families. The teachers resisted at times by speaking up, keeping quiet, avoiding negativity, recalling like-minded colleagues, and sometimes going it alone. Ultimately, their students' immediate successes sustained their vision for their work as advocates in the face of professional weathering forces.

Ambitious Teaching: "Where's the Logic?"

The teachers in my study were passionate and joyful learners. I observed each one of them engaging as co-learners with their students in hands-on activities, on-the-spot research, and instructional conversations around interactive read-alouds . "My simple goal is to inspire children to love learning as much as I do," stated Susie. The teachers were committed to the prospect of teaching their students to love learning, because they felt that the attitudes and skills necessary for learning would be beneficial for their students immediately and into their adult lives. "By opening a child's imagination you give that child the tool to be curious about change, and you give him the strength to not settle," explained Michelle. Each of the teachers used ambitious teaching practices, activities that addressed the curriculum standards through authentic problem solving resulting in deep thinking and intellectual dialogue (Lampert, Boerst, & Graziani, 2011) as a tool to advocate for their students' futures as intellectual people with "agency in the world."

Ladson-Billings (1995) argued that effective teachers of diverse students are able to inspire their students to choose excellence in learning, and these teachers pursued atmospheres of

academic excellence despite linguistic, socioeconomic, and learning challenges their students faced. By creating and participating with their students in learning experiences that were rich, engaging, and fun, the teachers certainly taught their students the content that they were supposed to be learning, but they also inspired them to enjoy the process of learning itself. Collaborative learning with time built in for exploring materials, discussing ideas, and trying out alternative solutions was the norm in these teachers' classrooms, and the teachers provided the opportunities intentionally, acknowledging that many of the students may not have had a chance to learn for fun like children from wealthier families.

Instances of ambitious teaching occurred in each of my participants' classrooms during my observations, and as with responsive classroom management strategies, the scenes and vocabulary were strikingly similar. Students were engaged in authentic problem solving, deep thinking, and intellectual dialogue around engineering design-build projects, mathematical problems, and academic vocabulary in content areas. The teachers rejected the traditional questioning pattern (Teacher asks question. Student responds. Teacher affirms or disaffirms the answer.) Instead, the teachers gave time for reflection, elicited students' opinions, and encouraged them to argue (respectfully) for their own opinions using logic. "Don't tell me. Tell your group!" "I like your answer, but where is the logic?" "Do you agree or disagree? Why?" Rich conversations centered around authentic learning experiences signified student engagement and motivation for more learning, and the teachers coached their students to successfully participate in their classroom learning community.

The teachers advocated for their students' immediate and future success by using ambitious teaching practices to teach content alongside teaching the skills and a love for learning. Students learned the content standards along with habits of mind that supported

problem-solving abilities while they were having fun with and learning to appreciate learning. Students absorbed in learning demonstrated improved behavior and greater self-management, and they experimented with and grew their interpersonal skills as they worked in groups. In turn, as with responsive classroom management, the students' academic and social growth protected them from negative labels and low expectations, and they gained increased agency, confidence, and self-esteem.

The teachers also benefited, because their students were engaged and learning, and they had more opportunities to reflect, to learn, and to improve on their teaching and differentiation for each of their students. "It makes teaching more interesting and the day go faster," explained Michelle. Also, administrators and colleagues affirmed their success by noticing that their students who in each case were labeled as "difficult" in one way or another were learning and participating in high-level thinking activities. Again, the greatest reward for the teachers was the knowledge that their work was making a difference in their students' progress and the hope that the experiences would positively impact their problem-solving capabilities as adults.

Although the teachers were committed to enacting their vision of anticipatory advocacy through the tool of ambitious teaching strategies, they recognized and accepted the fact that some of their peers disliked those kinds of learning experiences. They recalled comments from colleagues that the activities were exhausting, too messy and unstructured, and that they took time away from teaching basic content. In fact, the teachers noted that their use of responsive classroom management strategies gave them an underlying structure that supported ambitious teaching activities. Lampert (2009) referred to the power of responsive classroom management to balance stability with flexibility, an important combination for active learning.

Again, the teachers resisted at times by speaking up, keeping quiet, avoiding negativity, recalling like-minded colleagues, and sometimes going it alone. They sustained their vision for their work as advocates using the tool of ambitious teaching by focusing on the fact that their students enjoyed learning and that they were growing academically and socially in skills that had immediate and far reaching benefits.

Like-minded Allies: "Everything Expands."

The work of the teachers in my study extended far beyond their classroom doors into the school building and the neighborhood and beyond to the metropolitan area and even to international contacts. "Hopefully, we are adding some value to what you're about, and what you're going to be in the future," explained Jordan, referring to the numerous extracurricular activities with which she was involved and sponsored. To address "the whole child," the teachers developed relationships with a variety of stakeholders within and outside of the school for the purpose of supporting their academic and social growth in the immediate and distant future. "I want those kids to grow up, to be old, to lead the next generation," said Lola. By developing a network of like-minded allies, the teachers advocated for their students by enriching their academic and social lives through academic supports, extracurricular activities, and exposure to new people, ideas, and perspectives.

Engagement beyond the classroom to interact within the larger sociopolitical context was identified by Ladson-Billings (2001) as a characteristic of effective teachers of diverse students. The teachers in my study demonstrated sociopolitical consciousness as well as cultural competence as they built webs of supports and experiences for their students, providing immediate benefits, and in the process, teaching their students how to become culturally competent and conscious of their abilities to be change agents. Jordan explained the importance

of exposing her students to a variety of people and experiences, “There’s a bigger picture than just where you are. So, now you can help somebody else, and you can be a resource for someone.” Collaborating within the school, with families, and with community members, “added value” to students, and relying on like-minded allies was an important community of support for the teachers themselves.

Susie, Michelle, Lola, and Jordan advocated for their students by pursuing connections and actively collaborating with a variety of people within and outside of the school. Each teacher relayed stories that revealed the joys and struggles they experienced within their grade-level teams and with other teachers when they were thrown together in situations such as standardized testing administration, faculty meetings, and recess. They also worked closely with a variety of administrators, counselors, and support specialists to meet the academic and social needs of their diverse students. At times they acted as coordinators, collecting data, bringing together various specialists, and using their knowledge of their students’ histories, personalities, and changing needs to advocate for appropriate supports and to resist inappropriate measures. The teachers were also committed to and highly involved with the families of their students, organizing local trips within the community as well as major events at the school, and attending student extracurricular events after hours and on weekends. Conversely, the teachers often involved their own families in their classroom communities speaking of them to make connections with their students if not actually including them in class and school activities. There was no limit to the lengths the teachers went to build relationships with community members in order to advocate for their students’ success. They worked with local public services and parks personnel, city chamber of commerce representatives, university faculty and students, area churches and

businesses, charitable and service organizations, and even international non-governmental organization contacts to provide connections and experiences for their students.

Students benefited academically from the collaborative work of this group of teachers when they received appropriate services from ESOL and special education teachers, and their agency and self-esteem were in turn supported. The strengthening of the school network of educators improved the school culture as well as provided students with the support of additional caring adults. Fostering connections outside of the school provided a broader network of support, as students had additional experiences and opportunities for building relationships with adults who could serve as mentors in the immediate and distant future. As with the tools of responsive classroom management and ambitious teaching practices, academic and social growth the students experienced were additional protections from negative labels and low expectations, and their personal agency, confidence, and self-esteem were improved.

Although they were inspired to collaborate broadly in order to advocate for their students, the teachers themselves also benefited from their collaboration efforts. When their students received the academic supports they needed, the teachers' workload was lessened, and they could see the positive impact on their students' academic achievement. Improved collaboration within the school improved the school culture and work environment for the teachers, and their successes led to additional professional leadership and learning opportunities. Collaboration efforts the teachers made outside of their schools resulted in additional support for their students and their families when they brought individuals and groups to the school, arranged for trips to area locations, and when they received grants or material support for their work in the schools. The teachers benefitted from their own networks of like-minded allies when they saw their students' progress and knew that the work was supporting their immediate and future successes.

Interacting within schools can be "a delicate dance of compromise," (Ladson-Billings, 2001), and while the teachers in my study were adept at drawing on resources far and wide as they advocated for their students, they acknowledged the frustrations they sometimes felt in the process. "My joke is that the reason I got into teaching is because I don't do adults. I work with kids," quipped Lola during one focus group interview. Susie responded, "When people find out you're a teacher, especially in elementary school, [they ask], 'How can you do that all day?' I'm like, 'They're not my problem. It's the adults.'" Negativity and apathy were not the norm at the teachers' schools, but when they did detect negative attitudes and inaction from colleagues, the teachers resisted by at times speaking up, keeping quiet, avoiding negativity, recalling like-minded colleagues, and sometimes going it alone. Again, they sustained their collaborative work as advocates for their students by focusing on the ways increased support and exposure from additional caring adults was supporting their students' academic and social growth and success in elementary school as well as the positive impact it would have on their futures as adults.

Not Your Mother's Schoolteacher: Powerful Teacher Advocates

The teachers in this study viewed their work through a lens of anticipatory advocacy using the tools of culturally responsive management, ambitious teaching practices and like-minded allies to make differences in their students' lives beyond boundaries of time and space. They viewed their work with a moral reverence for the value of teachers in the lives of children, and a solemn devotion to the commitment they had made to urban students and schools (Noddings, 1988). Their beliefs about their own roles, their students' potential for success, and the importance of collaboration with people who could support their work were driving forces for their efforts, aligning with Ladson-Billings' (2011) argument that effective teachers must be experts on their students, social contexts, and curriculum and instruction. As they enacted their

visions for their work, they demonstrated personal commitments to the three expectations that Ladson-Billings (1995) argued were evident in the work of urban teachers who are successful with culturally diverse students. Those expectations were that: (1) students must be successful academically; (2) students must maintain their own culture, while becoming proficient in other cultures; and (3) students must be aware of and empowered to challenge social and political forces around them. I observed that these teachers demanded excellence of their students and of themselves. They recognized and valued all kinds of cultural assets, actively weaving those connections within the classroom, into the school building, and out into the school and community to build learning communities that supported their own effectiveness and their students' achievement. They reinforced curiosity and a love of learning among their students by building on students' background knowledge, constructing solid foundations for new learning, and by joining with students as collaborative learners. Furthermore, the teachers showed that they were prepared to resist and challenge the status quo in education as they resisted professional weathering forces and sustained their commitments to their visions (Grant & Agosto, 2011).

The teachers in my study practiced culturally relevant pedagogy in situations that barely resembled the *pedagogical harem* that Tyack (1974) described as a feature of the grammar of schooling in the United States (Tyack & Tobin, 1994). Although their physical surroundings recalled traditional egg-crate school designs, they did not succumb to isolation of people or ideas, but rather built communities within and outside of their classrooms and integrated curriculum in ways that allowed opportunities for authentic learning tasks and promoted deep thinking and intellectual dialogue for their students. Although my participants were all women, their gender did not restrain them from breaking free of traditional roles for teachers (Quantz,

1985; Weiner, 2002). Their administrators were also primarily women, and their affirmation and support was important in their efforts to resist professional weathering and sustain their visions for their work.

By using the tools of responsive classroom management, ambitious teaching practices, and like-minded allies, the teachers did not need to spend their time controlling children and forcing them to complete low-level, repetitive tasks day after day, essentially squelching creativity and the joy of learning (Waller, 1932). They stood apart from the teacher-dominated, traditional mode of learning that Dewey argued against (Dewey, 1938/1997). Rather, they enacted their visions for advocacy in ways that added value for their students' lives, a concept Dewey termed, co*llateral learning* (1938/1997).

> Collateral learning in the way of formation of enduring attitudes, of likes and dislikes, may be and often is much more important than the spelling lesson or lesson in geography or history that is learned. For these attitudes are fundamentally what count in the future. The most important attitude that can be formed is that of desire to go on learning (p. 48).

Teaching with an eye toward collateral learning was foundational to the teachers' visions of anticipatory advocacy.

The belief that their work as teachers included advocacy that spanned boundaries of time and space positively influencing students' lives in the immediate as well as distant future is a perspective in contrast to Lortie's (1975) findings that teachers tended to be inherently conservative, isolated, and focused on short-term results. Susie, Michelle, Lola, and Jordan, as culturally relevant teacher advocates, were committed to challenging the status quo for their students by critically examining and resisting teaching practices that did not serve their students success through the use of innovative pedagogical tools. They were community-oriented, actively building supportive communities within their classrooms and beyond to support their

work and their students' success. Finally, they faced forward unflinchingly, maintaining unwavering beliefs about their students' high potential and their own power to impact the future.

As I returned to consider the disturbing implications of Willard Waller's (1932) question, "What does teaching do to teachers?," I realized that perhaps the response depends on what *kind* of teaching one is referring to. Within this study, teaching with a vision toward anticipatory advocacy led to a series of mutually reinforcing successes achieved through the use of the tools of responsive classroom management, ambitious teaching practices, and like-minded allies.

Role of UACM Preparation

Ladson-Billings (1995) argued that seeking out and listening to the voices of effective teachers as they reflect on their own preparation experiences and development would be informative for teacher educators about the ways their preparation influences work in classrooms. By listening and talking with the teachers in my study as well as by observing them in action in their schools, I was able to understand their visions and enactments of advocacy at the end of their second year of teaching in urban high-need schools. UACM program interview documents gave me understandings about their dispositions toward students and teaching prior to entry into the program, and I found that in each case, the teachers communicated beliefs that were foundational to culturally relevant practice.

The UACM marketing and selection process was designed to recruit and identify candidates who were committed to urban schools and children and who had positive attitudes about urban children and families while also having awareness of the challenges often existing in urban contexts (Haberman, 2005). While the teachers claimed that their core beliefs were just "who we are," they acknowledged that prior to preparation in the UACM program, their core beliefs were idealistic. They described the program as "solidifying" their beliefs, giving them

words and actions to put their beliefs into practice. “It just comes down to the CRP [culturally relevant pedagogy] aspect of our program,” explained Lola.

Candidates in the UACM cohort in which the teachers were prepared were introduced to the theory of culturally relevant pedagogy in the first days of the program when they began readings and discussions of *Dreamkeepers* (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Combined with an intense introduction to a variety of multicultural research and experiences, the candidates took part in a six-week Maymester that laid the groundwork for the next two years of the program. Michelle described the importance of the Maymester course on her trajectory as a teacher,

> It really helped me to think about what I wanted to do with my life and in my classroom in general. Especially our Maymester class, and everything that we talked about, like meeting people from different backgrounds, different experiences. It makes you step outside of yourself and look at things from different people's perspectives, which I think is really helpful when you go into a classroom and you're working with different people from different backgrounds. So it just, it made me a more well-rounded person that I feel like is more empathetic and understanding. I've always been that way, but it just helped me become even more so.

Learning the theory of culturally relevant pedagogy gave reason to the teachers’ core beliefs.

Professors facilitating the course utilized creation of ground rules, positive teacher language, and active learning, practices integrated within the *Responsive Classroom Approach* to build community within the cohort and to introduce the tools (Ottmar, Rimm-Kaufman, Berry, & Larson, 2013). Subsequent course work included readings and discussions of *Responsive Classroom* texts: *Morning Meeting Book* (Kriete & Bechtel, 2002), *Rules in School* (Porter, Brady, & Forton, 2011), *The First Six Weeks of School* (Denton & Kriete, 2000), and *Classroom Spaces That Work* (Lord, Clayton, & Forton, 2001). The teachers successfully enacted their visions of anticipatory advocacy by using tools of responsive classroom management, ambitious

teaching strategies, and professional collaboration that they discovered and developed beginning with Responsive Classroom curriculum.

Despite having reputations as strong teachers and feeling degrees of confidence about their successes in the first years of teaching, the participants all expressed feelings that teaching was "harder than we thought it would be." In particular, each teacher described the second year as being harder than the first. When discussing that mutual feeling during a focus group, the teachers concluded that their successes during their first year of teaching had set their expectations for themselves high. In addition to having the first successful year as a formidable benchmark, each teacher had been given additional responsibilities and leadership requirements while they also operated during their second school year without support from UACM supervisors and regular contact with program faculty. Two were already grade-level team leads, and all were given classrooms with students that had been labeled for special services or identified as having extremely challenging behaviors.

The support of their UACM cohort continued to strengthen their commitment and resolve to their students and schools after graduation. "Just to see that who's still doing what they were dedicated to do at the very beginning of the program," explained Jordan. "That is motivation for us." "It's nice to know that I have a group of people that feel the same," stated Michelle. "You feel that support even though they're not really there with you." Selection of candidates whose beliefs and commitments matched the program's purposes helped to create a supportive community of like-minded teachers at the start of the program. Then additional coursework and field experiences, linking theory and practice, gave the teachers the tools they needed to succeed and to continue to strengthen their core beliefs despite challenges of professional weathering.

Significance of Study

In the current social and political climate where the value of university teacher education is questioned and undermined, where teachers are under attack for failures in the public school system, and where diverse children continue to be marginalized by the system, exploring sources of excellence in urban education is of vital importance (Dunn, 2014; Grossman, 2008; Kumashiro, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Weiner, 2000, 2002, Zeichner, 2010, 2013, 2014). Findings from this study benefitted inservice and preservice teachers, elementary students, teacher educators, and, finally, the participants themselves.

Inservice and Preservice Teachers and Students

The process of answering the research questions that guided this study shed light on the visions and practices of effective, established teacher graduates of the UACM program who were working in urban high-need elementary schools. Understanding how the teachers enacted their visions for themselves in their classrooms and school contexts provided examples of practices that resulted from specialized teacher education and that are also effective for teachers' and students' successes (Castro, 2014; Hammerness, 2001). In addition, understanding how these teachers resisted professional weathering forces that often reinforce traditional teacher roles while also sustaining their vision for themselves as culturally relevant educators, may be a source of hope for teachers struggling within the education system to maintain their visions for their work and for those who are contemplating a career in teaching.

Teacher Educators

Working backward to discover factors that have contributed to teachers' effectiveness, including elements of the participants' teacher preparation programs, is a research approach called for by multicultural researchers to strengthen the research base for preparing teachers for

work with diverse students (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Milner, 2009). This study was based on a backward-approach design beginning with effective teachers in the second year of their careers that were prepared within the same specialized teacher preparation program. The fact that the design also included careful attention to all aspects of trustworthiness, a feature repeatedly called for in educational research, gave it additional potential for contributing to the research base (Guba, 1981; Hollins & Guzman, 2005; Lincoln & Guba,1985; Sleeter, 2008). Finally, the nature of the study's focus on atypical cases (e.g. effective teachers committed to urban schools and a specialized teacher preparation program with retention results that far exceed national averages) highlighted potentially fruitful areas for further research (Riessman, 2008).

Participants

Not the least important when discussing my study's significance was the potential for the process to provide benefits for the participants. Dialogue between teachers is a form of professional development for teachers, because it can support reflective practice. In order to become reflective practitioners, the participants must feel that the setting is safe, that the other participants are trustworthy, and that the conversations are nonjudgmental and useful (Cavazos & The Members of WEST, 2001; Rust & Orland, 2001). "Teacher knowledge is most visible and tangible when teachers have time to communicate with each other " (Cavazos & The Members of WEST, 2001, p. 144). The interviews and focus group activities within this study were occasions for participants to speak about their journeys to teaching and to share support for each other as a community of learners within a risk-free setting. Having all graduated from the same teacher preparation program, the participants had relationships of varying degrees already, supporting a safe and respectful atmosphere.

In addition to the opportunity for the participants to learn from each other as professionals, there was the potential that engaging in the discourse community supported their identities as effective teachers for diverse students. Identity is constructed and strengthened through the telling and retelling of stories over time (Rodgers & Scott, 2008). Revisiting their early visions for themselves as culturally responsive teachers and talking with colleagues about the ways in which they had enacted and sustained their visions and resisted professional weathering further equipped these teachers for excellence in urban contexts.

Implications

This study provides insight into the ways in which four effective teachers working in urban high-need schools enact a vision of anticipatory advocacy by adeptly employing tools related to responsive classroom management, ambitious teaching strategies, and professional collaboration that they honed during their university teacher preparation program. The study links actual classroom practices with teacher preparation, an approach that has been sparse in teacher education research (Anderson & Stillman, 2013; Athanases & Martin, 2006; Sleeter & Owuor, 2011; Taymans et al., 2012; Wilson & Floden, 2003; Zeichner, 2005). Furthermore, working backward from effective teachers to study the role of their teacher preparation program in their work with diverse students has been called for repeatedly in teacher education. (Clift & Brady, 2005; Grant & Gibson, 2011; Gollnick, 1978; Grossman et al., 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2001; Hollins & Guzman, 2005; Milner, 2010; Sleeter and Owuor, 2011; Weiner, 2002).

In fact, the backward approach yielded information that was helpful for understanding the visions of these teachers for advocacy and the role of the program in their work. They held beliefs that aligned with the culturally relevant foundations of the program prior to their selection, and they retained their initial beliefs and values while they admitted to growing and

strengthening their commitments and practical skills. In these cases, teacher preparation strengthened their core beliefs by giving them tools for successful enactment of their visions, and their successes in turn further strengthened their visions and led to even more successes. Understanding how selection and preparation plays a role in the development and retention of effective teachers, particularly in challenging contexts, could provide stakeholders with insight into the value of rigorous preparation grounded in theory that promotes successful teaching for all children. Also, considering the possibility that early success in teaching may be an important factor in future successes and even retention could have implications for program design that incorporates induction support for new teachers and for administrators as they work with teachers who are new to their buildings. Ultimately, this research may provide insight into the power of teacher education to prepare teachers to be the teachers they desire to be.

Limitations

There are several limitations that one should consider relative to this research. One limitation is the fact that the study focused on only four teachers from one teacher preparation program, so generalizations to larger populations cannot be made from the findings. In addition, at the time of the study the teachers were completing their second year as teachers, placing them just one year out of their Master's program and the university supervisory support that is a standard practice for the UACM program. An important consideration would be the work of the teachers as they move further away from their preparation and induction years. Another limitation to consider is the fact that the teachers self-selected artifacts they shared, chose and scheduled the observations, and answered interview and focus group questions at their discretion, giving them the opportunities to influence findings. Finally, although the teachers in this study

were reported by numerous sources to be effective in their work, the research does not address their impact on their students' learning.

Future Research

Just as success bred success for my teacher participants, this research raises many possibilities for additional research. First, following these teachers as their careers progress would add insight into the ways their visions for advocacy and their use of the tools of their preparation program change or remain the same. Additional years of teaching would be especially important in understanding their abilities to resist professional weathering forces and sustain their visions. Also, given the important role that supportive administrators played in the work of these effective teacher advocates, future studies need to compare administrator interactions and influences with teachers prepared in different programs. In this study the question remains as to which came first-- administrative support for the teachers or the teachers' successful work in their schools. In fact, the impact of success on further success for these teachers points to the need for additional research on the possibility of a "Matthew effect" (Merton, 1968) for teachers, springing from early career advantages that lead to cumulative professional advantages, a "rich-get-richer" phenomenon. Finally, research illuminating the connections between the preparation of effective teachers and their students' achievement continues to be a priority for all stakeholders and replicating this kind of study time and again will increase understandings for effective practice and the role of preparation in the work of teachers of diverse students (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Conclusion

The teachers in this study were skilled classroom practitioners as well as thoughtful and caring individuals who poured their hearts into their work as advocates for their students.

Respect for the humanity of their students as young people possessing intrinsic value and potential as adults, and a humble awareness of their own influence as teachers on the futures of their students, inspired their visions for advocacy that transcended boundaries of time and space. Driven by a vision of anticipatory advocacy, they pursued classroom and school environments that supported their students' current and future successes using the tools of culturally responsive classroom management, ambitious teaching practices, and professional collaboration. As they successfully used the tools they had honed in the UACM program, they experienced the place they had envisioned. "Sense of place gives equilibrium; extended, it is sense of direction too" (Welty, 1957). Having reached it once, they resolved to return to it all over again with the confidence that their purpose and skills added value to all children.

REFERENCES

A Public Research University. *Georgia State University*. Retrieved from http://www.gsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/QuickFactsFlyer09_13.pdf

Abdal-Haqq, I. (1999). Unraveling the professional development school equity agenda. *Peabody Journal of Education, 75*(3/4), 145-160.

Alliance for Excellence in Education. (2014, July). *On the path to equity: Improving the effectiveness of beginning teachers*. Retrieved from the Alliance for Excellence in Education website: http://all4ed.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/PathToEquity.pdf

Anderson, L., & Olsen, B. (2006). Investigating early career urban teachers' perspectives on and experiences in professional development. *Journal of Teacher Education, 57*, 359-377.

Anderson, L. M., & Stillman, J. A. (2013). Student teaching's contribution to preservice teacher development: A review of research focused on the preparation of teachers for urban and high-needs contexts. *Review of Educational Research, 83*(1), 3-69.

Anfara, V. A., Brown, K. M., & Mangione, T. L. (2002). Qualitative analysis on stage: Making the research process more public. *Educational Researcher*, *31*(7), 28-38.

Athanases, S. Z., & De Oliveira, L. C. (2008). Advocacy for equity in classrooms and beyond: New teachers' challenges and responses. *Teachers College Record, 110*(1), 64-104.

Athanases, S. Z., & Martin, K. J. (2006). Learning to advocate for educational equity in a teacher credential program. *Teaching And Teacher Education, 22*, 627-646.

Atlanta Regional Commission. (2014, July). Does economic disadvantage matter for student achievement in the Atlanta region? Retrieved from the Atlanta Regional Commission website: http://news.atlantaregional.com/?p=1629

Bailey, C. A. (2007). *A guide to qualitative field research.* (2nd Ed.) Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.

Barker, K. S. (2014). Innovative ideas for tutoring and mentoring young English learners. In J. Keengwe & G. Onchwari (Eds.), *Cross-cultural considerations in the education of young immigrant learners (pp. 17-31)*. Hershey, PA: IGI Global.

Barker, K.S., Bhatnagar, R., & Many, J. (2013, April). *Preparing teachers for urban schools in the 21st century: A review of the literature*. Presented at the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, CA.

Bhatnagar, R., Kim, J., & Many, J. E. (2014). Candidate surveys on program evaluation: Examining instrument reliability, validity, and program effectiveness. *American Journal of Educational Research*, *2*, 683-690.

Boyd, D., Lankford, H., Loeb, S., & Wyckoff, J. (2005). Explaining the short careers of high-achieving teachers in schools with low-performing students. *American Economic Review, 95*(2), 166-171.

Burstein, N., Czech, M., Kretschmer, D., Lombardi, J., & Smith, C. (2009). Providing qualified teachers for urban schools: The effectiveness of the accelerated collaborative teacher preparation program in recruiting, preparing, and retaining teachers. *Action in Teacher Education, 31*(1), 24-37.

Castro, A. J. (2014). Visionaries, reformers, saviors, and opportunists: Visions and metaphors for teaching in the urban schools. *Education & Urban Society, 46*(1), 135-160.

Cavazos, L., & The Members of WEST. (2001). Connected conversations: Forms and functions of teacher talk. In C. Clark (Ed.), *Talking shop: Authentic Conversation and Teacher Learning* (pp. 82-117). New York: Teachers College Press

Charmaz, K. (2007). Tensions in qualitative research*, Sociologisk Forskning*, *44*(3), 76-85.

Clayton, J. K. (2011). Changing diversity in U.S. schools: The impact on elementary student performance and achievement. *Education and Urban Society, 43*(6), 671-695.

Clift, R. T., & Brady, P. (2005). Researching teacher education in changing times: Politics and paradigms. In M. Cochran-Smith & K. M. Zeichner (Eds.), *Studying teacher education: The report of the AERA Panel on Research and Teacher Education* (pp. 309-424). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Cochran-Smith, M. (1991). Learning to teach against the grain. *Harvard Educational Review, 61*, 279-311.

Cochran-Smith M., & Fries K. (2005) Researching teacher education in changing times: Politics and paradigms. In M. Cochran-Smith & K. Zeichner (Eds.), *Studying teacher education*: *the report of the AERA panel on research and teacher education* (pp. 69-110). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Inc.

Cochran-Smith, M., & Fries, K. (2008) Research on teacher education: Changing times, changing paradigms. In Cochran-Smith M., Feiman-Nemser S., McIntyre, J.; & Demers, K. (Eds.), *Handbook of research on teacher education: enduring questions in changing contexts* (3rd ed.), (pp. 1050-93). New York: Routledge.

Council of the Great City Schools. (2014, October). *Good News about Urban Public Schools*. Retrieved from Council of the Great City Schools website: http://www.cgcs.org/cms/lib/DC00001581/Centricity/Domain/87/2014%20Good%20News_FINALindd.pdf

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches.* (3rd ed.). Los Angeles : SAGE Publications.

Cuban, L. (2013). *Inside the black box of classroom practice: Change without reform in American education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

Darling-Hammond, L. (2006). *Powerful teacher education: Lessons from exemplary programs.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

DeWalt, K. M., & DeWalt, B. R. (2011). *Participant observation: A guide for fieldworkers.* Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefied.

Dewey, J. (1904). *The educational situation* (No. 3). University of Chicago Press.

Dewey, J. (1938/1997). *Experience and education*. New York: Kappa Delta Pi.

Dunn, A.H. (2010). Urban teacher learning: A review of related literature. In A.J. Stairs & K.A. Donnell KA. (Eds.), *Research on urban teacher learning: Examining contextual factors over time* (pp. 11-25). Charlotte, N.C.: IAP-Information Age.

Dunn, A.H. (2014). *Time after time: Why teachers are so frustrated with Time's 'Rotten Apples' cover story.* Retrieved online 5, March, from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/alyssa-hadley-dunn/time-rotten-apples_b_6049966.html

Ensign, J. (2009). Multiculturalism in four teacher education programs: For replication or transformation. *Multicultural Perspectives, 11*(3), 169-173.

Frankenberg, E. (2009). The demographic context of urban schools and districts. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 42*(3), 255-271.

Freeman, M., de Marris, K., Preissle, J., Roulston, K., & St. Pierre, E. (2007). Standards of evidence in qualitative research: An incitement to discourse, *Educational Research*, *36*(1), 25-32.

Freedman, S. W., & Appleman, D. (2009). “In it for the long haul”—: How teacher education can contribute to teacher retention in high-poverty, urban schools. *Journal of Teacher Education, 60*, 323-337.

Furman, J. S. (2008). Tensions in multicultural teacher education research: Demographics and the need to demonstrate effectiveness. *Education and Urban Society, 41*(1), 55-79.

Garcia, E. E., & Cuellar, D. (2006). Who are these linguistically and culturally diverse students? *Teachers College Record, 108*, 2220-2246.

García, E., Arias, M. B., Murri, N. J. H., & Serna, C. (2010). Developing responsive teachers: A challenge for a demographic reality. *Special Issue: Bold Ideas for Improving Teacher Education and Teaching, 61*(1/2), 132-142.

Gay, G. (2000). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice.* New York : Teachers College.

Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures: selected essays.* New York, Basic Books.

Goldenberg, B. M. (2014). White teachers in urban classrooms: Embracing non-White students’ cultural capital for better teaching and learning. *Urban Education, 49*(1), 111-144.

Gollnick, D. M. (1978). *Multicultural education in teacher education: The state of the scene.* Washington, DC: American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education.

Grant, C. A., & Agosto, V. (2011). Teacher capacity and social justice in teacher education. In A. F. Ball & C. A. Tyson (Eds.), *Studying Diversity in Teacher Education* (pp. 175-200): Rowman & Littlefield.

Grant, C. A., & Gillette, M. (2006). A candid talk to teacher educators about effectively preparing teachers who can teach everyone's children. *Journal of Teacher Education, 57*, 292-299.

Grant, G., & Gibson, M. (2011). Diversity and teacher education: A historical perspective on research and policy. In A. F. Ball & C. A. Tyson (Eds.*), Studying Diversity in Teacher Education* (pp. 19-60): Roman & Littlefield.

Grossman, P. (2008). Responding to our critics: From crisis to opportunity in research on teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education, 59*(1), 10-23.

Grossman, P. L., Valencia, S. W., Evans, K., Thompson, C., Martin, S., & Place, N. (2000). Transitions into teaching: Learning to teach writing in teacher education and beyond. *Journal of Literacy Research, 32*, 631-662.

Guba, E.G. (1981). Criteria for assessing the trustworthiness of naturalistic inquiries. *Educational Communication and Technology*, *29*(2), 75-91.

Gutierrez, K., Baquedano-Lopez, P., & Tejeda, C. (1999). Rethinking diversity: Hybridity and hybrid language practices in the third space. *Mind, Culture, and Activity*, *6*(4), 286-303.

Haberman, M. (2005). *Star teachers: The ideology and best practice of effective teachers of diverse children and youth in poverty.* West Lafayette,IN: Haberman Educational Foundation.

Hamilton, L., Werum, R., Steelman, L. C., & Powell, B. (2011). Frontiers in sociology of education. In M. T. Hallinan (Ed.), *Frontiers in sociology and social research (*Vol. 1, pp. 205-223): New York: Springer.

Hammerness, K. (2001). Teachers' visions: The role of personal ideals in school reform. *Journal of Educational Change*, *2*(2), 143-163.

Hammerness, K. (2006). *Seeing through teachers' eyes: Professional ideals and classroom practices.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Hammerness, K. (2008). "If you don't know where you are going, any path will do": The role of teachers' visions in teachers' career paths. *New Educator*, *4*(1), 1-22.

Hammerness, K., & Matsko, K. K. (2013). When context has content: A case study of new teacher induction in the University of Chicago's urban teacher education program. *Urban Education, 48*, 557-584.

Headden, S. (2014). *Beginners in the classroom: What the changing demographics of teaching mean for schools, students, and society*. Stanford, CA: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

Henry, G. T., Bastian, K. C., & Fortner, C. K. (2011). Stayers and leavers: Early-career teacher effectiveness and attrition. *Educational Researcher, 40*(6), 271-280.

Herbst, J. (1989). *And sadly teach: Teacher education and professionalization in American culture.* Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.

Highlights & Rankings. (n.d.) Retrieved from http://education.gsu.edu/about/highlights-rankings/

Hoffman, N. (2003). *Woman's "true" profession: Voices from the history of teaching.* (2nd ed.). Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

Hollins, E. R., & Guzman, M. T. (2005). Research on preparing teachers for diverse populations. In M. Cochran-Smith & M. Zeichner (Eds.), *Studying teacher education: The report of the AERA Panel on Research and Teacher Education* (pp. 477-548). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Hooker, S., Fix, M., & McHugh, M. (2014). Education reform in a changing Georgia: Promoting high school and college success for immigrant youth. Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute.

Howard, T. C., & Aleman, G. R. (2011). Teacher capacity for diverse learners: What do teachers need to know? In A. F. Ball & C. A. Tyson (Eds.), *Studying Diversity in Teacher Education* (pp. 157-174): Rowman & Littlefield.

Hutcheson, P.A., & Pederson, R. (2002). Another victory for the schoolmen: Teacher education and the junior college. Unpublished manuscript, Department of Educational Policy Studies, Georgia State University, Atlanta, GA.

Hutcheson, P. A. (2007). The Truman Commission's vision of the future. *Thought & Action* (107-115).

Hutcheson, P.A. (2012). "HES Presidential Address": Confessions of a Positivist--How Foucault Led Me to a Meta-Narrative about School Desegregation. *History Of Education Quarterly*, *52*(1), 1-28.

Ingersoll, R., & May, H. (2011). *Recruitment, retention and the minority teacher shortage*. CPRE Research Report #RR-69. Philadelphia: Consortium for Policy Research in Education, University of Pennsylvania.

Ingersoll, R., Merrill, L., & Stuckey, D. (2014). *Seven trends: The transformation of the teaching force*. CPRE Research Report #RR-80. Philadelphia: Consortium for Policy Research in Education, University of Pennsylvania.

Ingersoll, R. M., & Strong, M. (2011). The impact of induction and mentoring programs for beginning teachers: A critical review of the research. *Review of Educational Research, 81*(2), 201-233.

Irvine, J. J. (2003). *Educating teachers for diversity: Seeing with a cultural eye.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Jimerson, L. (2005). Placism in NCLB—How rural children are left behind. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 38*(3), 211-219.

Johnson, E., Oppenheim, R., & Suh, Y. (2009). "Would that be social justice?" A conceptual constellation of social justice curriculum in action. *New Educator, 5*, 293-310.

Johnson, S. M., & Kardos, S. M. (2008). The next generation of teachers: Who enters, who stays, and why. In M. Cochran-Smith, S. Feiman-Nemser, D. J. McIntyre, & K. E. Remers (Eds.), *Handbook of Research on Teacher Education* (pp. 445-467). New York: Routledge.

Kena, G., Aud, S., Johnson, F., Wang, X., Zhang, J., Rathbun, A.,...Kristapovich, P. (2014). The Condition of Education 2014 (NCES 2014-083). Report of National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2014083

King, J. (1991). Dysconscious racism: Ideology, identity, and the miseducation of teachers. *The Journal of Negro Education, 60*(2), 133-146.

King, J. (1997). “Thank you for opening our minds”: On praxis, transmutation, and Black Studies in teacher development. In J. King, E. Hollins, & W. Hayman (Eds.), *Preparing teachers for cultural diversity* (pp. 156-173). New York: Teachers College Press.

Kumashiro, K. K. (2012). *Bad teacher!: How blaming teachers distorts the bigger picture*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Labaree, D. (2004). *The trouble with Ed Schools.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1990). Like lightning in a bottle: Attempting to capture the pedagogical excellence of successful teachers of black students. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 3*(4), 335-344.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1994). *The dreamkeepers: Successful teachers of African American children.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). But that's just good teaching! The case for culturally relevant pedagogy*, Theory into Practice*, *34*(3), 159-165.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1999). Preparing teachers for diverse student populations: A critical race theory perspective*. Review of Research in Education*, *24*, 211-247.

Ladson-Billings, G. (2001). *Crossing over to Canaan: The journey of new teachers in diverse classrooms.* San Francisco : Jossey-Bass.

Ladson-Billings, G. (2014). Culturally relevant pedagogy 2.0: a.k.a. the Remix. *Harvard Educational Review, 84*(1), 74-84.

Lampert, M., & Graziani, F. (2009). Instructional activities as a tool for teachers' and teacher educators' learning. *The Elementary School Journal*, *109*(5), 491-509.

Lampert, M., Boerst, T., & Graziani, F. (2011). Organizational resources in the service of school-wide ambitious teaching practice. *Teachers College Record,* 113(7), 1361-1400.

Laughter, J. C. (2011). Rethinking assumptions of demographic privilege: Diversity among white preservice teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education: An International Journal of Research and Studies, 27*(1), 43-50.

Lewis, A. D. (2012). Crossing boundaries: Exploring Black middle and upper class preservices teachers' perceptions of teaching and learning in high-poverty urban schools." (Dissertation). Available from http://scholarworks.gsu.edu/ece_diss/16

Lightfoot, S. L. (1978). *Worlds apart: Relationships between families and schools.* New York: Basic Books.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications.

Lortie, D. C. (1975). *Schoolteacher: A sociological study.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Many, J. E., Fisher, T. R., Ogletree, S,, & Taylor, D. (2012). Crisscrossing the university and public school contexts as professional development school boundary spanners. *Issues in Teacher Education, 21*(3), 83-102.

Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (1995). *Designing qualitative research*. (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Martin, N., Schafer, N., McClowry, S., Emmer, E., Brekelmans, M., Mainhard, T., & Wubbels, T. (2016). Expanding the definition of classroom management: Recurring themes and new conceptualizations. Journal of Classroom Interaction, *51*(1), 31-41.

Matsko, K. K., & Hammerness, K. (2014). Unpacking the "urban" in urban teacher education: Making a case for context-specific preparation. *Journal of Teacher Education, 65*, 128-144.

May, L. A. (2011). Situating strategies: An examination of comprehension strategy instruction in one upper elementary classroom oriented toward culturally relevant teaching. *Literacy Research and Instruction, 50*(1), 31-43.

McIntosh, P. (1990). White privilege: Unpacking the invisible knapsack. *Independent School, 90*(49), 31-36.

Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Merton, Robert K. (1968). The Matthew Effect in Science. *Science 159*: 56–63.

Merton, R. K., Lowenthal, M. F., & Kendall, P. L. (1990). *The focused interview: A manual of problems and procedures*. (2nd ed.). New York: Collier Macmillan.

Milner, H. R. (2010). What does teacher education have to do with teaching? Implications for diversity studies. *Journal of Teacher Education, 61*, 118-131.

Milner, H. R. (2012). But what is urban education? *Urban Education, 47*, 556-561.

Moll, L., & González, N. (1994). Lessons from research with language-minority children. *Journal of Literacy Research, 26*(4), 439.

Monk, D.H. (2007). Recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers in rural areas. *Future of Chldren, 17*(1), 155-174.

Morrison, K. A., Robbins, H. H., & Rose, D. G. (2008). Operationalizing culturally relevant pedagogy: A synthesis of classroom-based research. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 41*, 433-452.

Murrell, P. C. (2000). Community teachers: A conceptual framework for preparing exemplary urban teachers. *The Journal of Negro Education*, *69,* 338-348.

Ng, J., & Thomas, K. (2007). Cultivating the cream of the crop: A case study of urban teachers from an alternative teacher education program. *Action in Teacher Education, 29*(1), 3-19.

Noddings, N. (1986). Fidelity in teaching, teacher education, and research for teaching. *Harvard Educational Review, 56*, 496-510.

Noddings, N. (1988). An ethic of caring and its implications for instructional arrangements, *American Journal of Education*, *92*, 215-230.

Northcutt, N., & McCoy, D. (2004). *Interactive qualitative analysis: A systems method for qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Oakes, J., Franke, M. L., Quartz, K. H., & Rogers, J. (2002). Research for high-quality urban teaching: Defining it, developing it, assessing it. *Journal of Teacher Education, 53*, 228-234.

Osgood, R. L. (1997). Undermining the common school ideal: Intermediate schools and ungraded classes in Boston, 1838-1900. *History of Education Quarterly, 37*(4), 375-398.

Ottmar,E.R., Rimm-Kaufman,S., Berry, R.Q., & Larson. (2013). Does the Responsive Classroom Aproach affect the use of standards-based mathematics teaching practices? Results from a randomized controlled trial. *The Elementary School Journal*, *113*(3), 434-457.

Paris, D. (2012). Culturally sustaining pedagogy: A needed change in stance, terminology, and practice. *Educational Researcher, 41*(3), 93-97.

Paris, D., & Alim, H. S. (2014). What are we seeking to sustain through culturally sustaining pedagogy? A loving critique forward. *Harvard Educational Review, 84*(1), 85-100.

Peterson, K., Bennet, B., & Sherman, D. (1991). Themes of uncommonly successful teachers of at-risk students. *Urban Education, 26*, 176-194.

Quantz, R. A. (1985). The complex visions of female teachers and the failure of unionization in the 1930s: An oral history. *History of Education Quarterly 25*(4), 439-458.

Quartz, K.H. (2003). "To angry to leave": Supporting new teachers' commitment to transform urban schools. *Journal of Teacher Education, 54*(2), 99-111.

Quartz, K. H., Thomas, A., Anderson, L., Masyn, K., Lyons, K. B., & Olsen, B. (2008). Careers in motion: A longitudinal retention study of role changing among early-career urban educators. *Teachers College Record, 110*(1), 218-250.

Rickman, D. (2014). *Top Ten Issues to Watch in 2014* (Vol. 10): Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education. Retrieved from http://www.gpee.org/fileadmin/files/PDFs/GPEE_Top_Ten_2014_Final.pdf

Riessman, C. K. (2008). *Narrative methods for the human sciences*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Rodgers, C., & Scott, K. (2008). The development of the personal self and professional identity in learning to teach. In M. Cochran-Smith, S. Feiman-Nemser, & J. McIntyre (Eds.), *Handbook of research on teacher education: Enduring questions in changing contexts* (pp. 732-755). New York: Routledge.

Ronfeldt, M., Loeb, S., & Wyckoff, J. (2013). How teacher turnover harms student achievement. *American Educational Research Journal, 50*(1), 4-36.

Rury, J. L. (1989). Who became teachers? The social characteristics of teachers in American history. In D. Warren (Ed.), *American teachers: Histories of a profession at work*, (pp. 9-48). New York: Macmillan.

Rust, F., & Orland, L. (2001). Learning the discourse of teaching: Conversation as professional development. In C. Clark (Ed.), *Talking shop: Authentic conversation and teacher learning* (pp. 82-117). New York: Teachers College Press.

Saldaña, J. (2013). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. (2nd ed). Los Angeles: Sage.

Schulman, L. (2006). Forward. In K. Hammerness, *Seeing through teachers' eyes: Professional ideals and classroom practices*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Sleeter, C.E. (2001). Preparing teachers for culturally diverse schools: Research and the overwhelming presence of whiteness. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 52(2), 94-106.

Sleeter, C.E. (2008). Preparing White teachers for diverse students. In Cochran-Smith M., Feiman-

Nemser S., McIntyre, J.; & Demers, K. (Eds.), *Handbook of research on teacher education: enduring questions in changing contexts* (3rd ed.), (pp. 559-82). New York: Routledge.

Sleeter, C. E., & Owuor, J. (2011). Research on the impact of teacher preparation to teach diverse students: The research we have and the research we need. *Action in Teacher Education, 33*, 524-536.

Stake, R. (2006). *Multiple case study analysis*. New York: Guilford Press.

Stake, R. (2010). *Qualitative research: Studying how things work*. New York: Guilford Press.

Strauss, A. L., & Corbin, J. M. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory.* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Tamir, E. (2010). The retention question in context-specific teacher education: Do beginning teachers and their program leaders see teachers' future career eye to eye. *Teaching and Teacher Education: An International Journal of Research and Studies, 26*, 665-678.

Taymans, J., Tindle, K., Freund, M., Ortiz, D., & Harris, L. (2012). Opening the black box: Influential elements of an effective urban professional development school. *Urban Education, 47*, 224-249.

Tinker Sachs, G., Fisher, T., & Cannon, J. (2011). Collaboration, mentoring and co-teaching in teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education for Sustainability, 13*(2), 70-86.

Truscott, D.M., & Stenhouse, V. (2015, November). Dispositions and culturally relevant pedagogy: Advancing the discussion and research. Presented at the National Association of Multicultural Education Conference, New Orleans, LA.

Truscott, D., & Roden, J. (2006). Perceptions about urban schools: Changes in preservice teachers after working in a city school. *Journal of Urban Learning, Teaching, and Research, 2*, 192-202.

Tyack, D. (1974). *The one best system: A history of American urban education.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Tyack, D., & Tobin, W. (1994). The 'grammar' of schooling: Why has it been so hard to change? *American Educational Research Journal 31*(3), 453-479.

Urban, W. J., & Wagoner, J. L. (2009). *American education: A history.* (4th ed.). New York: Routledge.

Urban, W. (2010). *More than science: The National Defense Education Act of 1958*. Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press.

Villegas, A. M., & Lucas, T. (2002). Preparing culturally responsive teachers: Rethinking the curriculum. *Journal of Teacher Education, 53*(1), 20-32.

Waller, W. (1932). *The sociology of teaching.* New York: John Wiley.

Walker, V. S. (1996). *Their highest potential: An African American school community in the segregated South: An African American school community in the segregated south*. Raleigh, NC: University of North Carolina Press.

Weiner, L. (2000). Research in the 90s: Implications for urban teacher preparation. *Review of Educational Research*, *70*(3), 369-406.

Weiner, L. (2002). Evidence and inquiry in teacher education: What's needed for urban schools. *Journal of Teacher Education, 53*(3), 254-261.

Weinstein, C., Curran, M., & Tomlinson-Clarke, S. (2003). Culturally responsive classroom management: Awareness into action. *Theory into Practice*, *42*(4), 269-276.

Welty, E. (1957). *Place in fiction.* New York: House of Books.

Whipp, J. L. (2013). Developing socially just teachers: The interaction of experiences before, during, and after teacher preparation in beginning urban teachers. *Journal of Teacher Education, 64*(5), 454-467.

Williams, B., May, L. A., & Williams, R. F. (2012). Flowers, fruits, & fingers: Preservice teachers write about difficult topics for a child audience. *Multicultural Education*, *19*(3), 27-33.

Wilson, S. M., & Floden, R. E. (2003). *Creating effective teachers: Concise answers for hard questions. An addendum to the report "teacher preparation research: Current knowledge, gaps, and recommendations."* Washington, DC: AACTE Publications.

Windschitl, M., Thompson, J., & Braaten, M. (2011). Ambitious pedagogy by novice teachers: Who benefits from tool-supported collaborative inquiry into practice and why? *Teachers College Record*, *113*(7), 1311-1360.

Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods.* (4th ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications.

Young, E. (2010). Challenges to conceptualizing and actualizing culturally relevant pedagogy: How viable is the theory in classroom practice? *Journal of Teacher Education, 61*, 248-260.

Zeichner, K. (2005). A research agenda for teacher education. In M. Cochran-Smith & K. M. Zeichner (Eds.), *Studying teacher education: The report of the AERA panel on research and teacher education* (pp. 737-759). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Zeichner, K. (2010). Rethinking the connections between campus courses and field experiences in college- and university-based teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 6(1-2), 89-99.

Zeichner, K. (2013). *Why the 'GREAT Teachers and Principals Act' is not great*. Retrieved online 5, March, from https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2013/10/10/why-the-great-teachers-and-principals-act-is-not-great/

Zeichner, K. (2014). The struggle for the soul of teaching and teacher education in the USA. *Journal of Education for Teaching, 40*, 551-568.

Zhao, Y. (2010). Preparing globally competent teachers: A new imperative for teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education, 61*, 422-431.

Children's Literature

Covey, S. (2008). *The 7 habits of happy kids*. Simon and Schuster.

DiCamillo, K. (2009). *Because of Winn-Dixie.* Candlewick Press.

DiCamillo, K. (2009). *The tale of Despereaux: Being the story of a mouse, a princess, some soup, and a spool of thread.* Candlewick Press.

Nivola, C.A. (2008). *Planting the Trees of Kenya: The Story of Wangari Maathai.* Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Parish, P. (1995). *Come Back, Amelia Bedelia.* HarperCollins.

Simms, P.F. (2001). *African American history: The inventors.* Shawnee Press.

Winter, J. (2008). *Wangari's trees of peace: A true story from Africa.* Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Professional Literature

Buhrow, B., & Garcia, A. U. (2006). *Ladybugs, tornadoes, and swirling galaxies: English language learners discover their world through inquiry*. Stenhouse Publishers.

Denton, P., & Kriete, R. (2000). *The first six weeks of school*. Center for Responsive Schools.

Johnston, P. H. (2004). *Choice words: How our language affects children's learning*. Stenhouse Publishers.

Kozol, J. (2012). *Savage inequalities: Children in America's schools*. Broadway Books.

Kriete, R., & Bechtel, L. (2014). *The morning meeting book: K-8*. (3rd Ed.). Center for Responsive Schools.

Lord,J., Clayton, M., & Forton, M.B. (2001). *Classroom spaces that work*. Center for Responsive Schools.

Porter, D., Brady, K., & Forton, M.B. (2011). *Rules in School: Teaching discipline in the responsive classroom.* (2nd Ed.). Center for Responsive Schools.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

NOMINATION SURVEY

Thank you for participating in this six-question survey. We are interested in understanding how effective UACM teacher graduates are influenced in their work by elements of the UACM program. We are conducting a multicase study, and we are seeking nominations of potential participants from the [NAME] cohort. If you would like to nominate a teacher or teachers, please complete the survey. You may nominate as many teachers as you wish.

1. Your name
2. Name of nominee
3. School
4. Why do you feel that this teacher is effective?
5. Describe your experiences with the teacher while s/he was in the program.
6. Describe any experiences with the teacher after completion of the program.

Appendix B

OVERVIEW OF PARTICIPANT ENGAGEMENT BY WEEK

Participant engagement by week						ACCESS Completed				SPRING BREAK	GEORGIA MILESTONES	GEORGIA MILESTONES				LAST WEEK OF SCHOOL	
	1/30	2/6	2/13	2/20	2/27	3/6	3/13	3/27	4/3	4/6	4/17	4/24	5/1	5/8	5/15	5/22	5/29
Email	X											X					
Consent	X	X											X				
I-1		X	X		ANALYSIS OF DATA		ANALYSIS OF DATA		ANALYSIS OF DATA	SPRING BREAK	GEORGIA MILESTONES	GEORGIA MILESTONES	X				
Capstone		X	X										X				
Artifacts		X	X										X				
O-1			X	X		X								X			
I-2			X			X								X			
O-2						X		X							X		
O-3													X		X	X	
I-3															X	X	X
FG-1													X				
FG-2															X		
FG-3																	X
Week #	1	2	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	12	13	14	15	16	17

Key- I=Interview; O=Observation; FG=Focus Group

Appendix C

OVERVIEW OF RESEARCHER ENGAGEMENT BY WEEK

Researcher engagement by week							ACCESS Completed				Last week for observations	Spring Break		Georgia Milestones Testing				Last week of school	
	1/30	2/6	2/13	2/20	2/27	3/6	3/13	3/20	3/27	4/3	4/6	4/17	5/1	5/8	5/11	5/15	5/22	5/20	06-00
Memos	M		M		M		M		M			M	M		M		M		M
Faculty Nom.	C/A	A																	A
Principal Conf.		C/A	C/A										C						A
Program artifacts	C/A	A	C/A										C/A						A
I-1		I/A	I/A	A	A									I/A	A				A
Capstone Projects		C/A	C/A										C/A						A
Part. Artifacts		C/A	C/A	C/A										C/A	A				A
O-1			O/A	O/A		O/A								O/A	A				A
I-2			I/A			I/A	I/A	A						I/A	A				A
O-2						O/A			O/A	A						O/A	A		A
O-3													O/A	A	O/A	A		O/A	A
I-3																I/A	I/A	I/A	A
FG-1													I/A	A					A
FG-2															I/A	A			A
FG-3																		I/A	A
Within case analysis																		A	A
Between case analysis																			A
Week #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	14	15	16	17	18	19	20

Key- A=Analyze; AN=As Needed; C=Collect; FG=Focus Group; I=Interview; M=Memo; O=Observe/Observation; W=Write

Appendix D

DATA COLLECTION PROGRESS CHART

	Consent	I -1	O-1	I-2	O-1	O-2	I-3	FG-1	FG-2	FG-3
S	2/1/15	2/5/15	2/19/15	2/19/15	3/25/15 Student-led Conf.	5/28/15 Class awards day	5/28/15	4/29/15	5/21/15	5/28/15
M	2/4/15	2/15/15	3/10/15	3/10/15	3/27/15 Engineer-for-a-day build	5/15/15 5K race	5/20/15	4/29/15	5/21/15	5/28/15
L	2/12/15	2/16/15	3/2/15	3/10/15	3/05/15 Black History Month event	4/30/15 After-school soccer program	5/21/15	4/29/15	5/21/15	5/28/15
J	5/4/15	5/4/15	5/8/15	5/12/15	5/14/15	5/14/15	5/19/15	N/A	5/21/15	5/28/15

Key- I=Interview; O=Observation; FG=Focus Group; S=Susie; M=Michelle; L=Lola; J=Jordan

Appendix E

QUESTIONS FOR INITIAL INTERVIEW

1. You have a strong reputation as a teacher who is effective with diverse students. Why do you think you have this reputation?
2. Describe your vision for your work as an effective teacher for diverse students.
3. In what ways does your vision for yourself as a teacher contribute to your effectiveness?
4. How are notions of advocacy for your students evident within your vision for your work?
5. View the capstone project video.
    a. Tell me about your experience completing this assignment.
    b. How did you feel about the final product?
    c. What were your colleagues' reactions to your final product?
6. View the artifacts that the participant provides.
    a. Tell me about the artifacts that you have brought to the interview.
    b. How do these artifacts represent your work as an effective teacher for diverse students?
7. Describe the ways that your work is received within your school context? (colleagues, administrators, community)

Appendix F

QUESTIONS FOR SECOND INTERVIEW

1. Tell me how you feel about the way your school day went the day that I observed.
2. Describe instances you recall where you felt the need to advocate for your students.
3. How do you feel about the ways in which you advocated?
    a. Are these situations typical in your school context? In what ways?
    b. How do you feel that your efforts made a difference for your students?
    c. Are there ways in which you wish you had done more or less?
    d. What resulted from the act(s) of advocacy? Describe any follow-up consequences.
4. Describe any reactions to the ways in which you advocated for your students. (faculty, administration, staff, and/or parents)
    a. How do you feel about these reactions?
    b. How do these reactions influence your future actions on behalf of your students?
5. How did that school day compare to your vision for your work in the capstone project that we views previously? How did it compare to your self-selected artifacts?

Appendix G

QUESTIONS FOR THIRD INTERVIEW

1. Why did you select these particular events for me to observe?
2. Tell me how you feel about the school-related events that I observed.
3. Describe instances during these events where you felt the need to advocate for your students.
4. How do you feel about the ways in which you advocated?
    a. Are these situations typical in your school context? In what ways?
    b. How do you feel that your efforts made a difference for your students?
    c. Are there ways in which you wish you had done more or less?
    d. What resulted from the act(s) of advocacy? Describe any follow-up consequences.
5. Describe any reactions to the ways in which you advocated for your students. (faculty, administration, staff, and/or parents)
    a. How do you feel about these reactions?
    b. How do these reactions influence your future actions on behalf of your students?
6. How did these events compare to your vision for your work in the capstone project that we views previously? How did it compare to your self-selected artifacts?

Appendix H

INITIAL FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Effective Teachers as Advocates during Testing - April 2015	**Purpose of the questions**
Introduction: Good morning everyone. Thank you for participating in this focus group. I am interested in understanding your work as advocates for your students during the spring testing season. I am going to ask a few questions in these areas. Please know that there are no right or wrong answers. I want you to feel comfortable sharing positive viewpoints as well as critical perspectives. I am not here to promote a particular perspective. You also do not have to agree with everyone in the group if that's not how you really feel. I will use the information from today's discussion to explore the ways our teacher graduates enact and sustain their visions for teaching. I am recording the focus group so that I can accurately capture your ideas for analysis and next steps. If during the focus group interview you decide that there is something you would like to tell me privately, then please jot down your thought and send it to me by email (kbarker3@gsu.edu) or call me [phone number]. I ask that you talk one at a time so that I can be sure to hear everyone's views and get them on tape. When you say something, please say your first name so that the person transcribing the tape will know who is talking. You can say something like, "This is Molly". Does anyone have any questions before we begin? Let's start by introducing ourselves (first name only) and telling each other what grade level we teach.	
Describe instances during spring testing where you felt the need to advocate for your students. 1. How do you feel about the ways in which you advocated? 2. Are these situations typical in your school context? In what ways? 3. How do you feel that your efforts made a difference for your students? 4. What resulted from the act(s) of advocacy? Describe any follow-up consequences.	To understand ways in which teacher graduates enact their visions for teaching.
5. Describe any reactions to the ways in which you advocated for your students. (faculty, administration, staff, and/or parents) a. How do you feel about these reactions? b. How do these reactions influence your future actions on behalf of your students?	To understand how teacher graduates sustain their visions for their work.
6. If you could approach these situations differently, what would you do? 7. Are there ways in which you wish you had done more or less in these situations? 8. How did these situations compare with your early vision for your work as a teacher? You current vision?	To understand how teacher graduates practices as advocates aligns with their visions for themselves as teachers.
Are there are any other ideas or thoughts that you would like to share? Thank you for your ideas. Feel free to email me if you have any other thoughts you would like to share.	

Appendix I

SECOND FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Effective Teachers as Advocates Final - May 2015	**Purpose of the questions**
Introduction: Good morning everyone. Thank you for participating in this focus group. This is our final opportunity to discuss your work as advocates for your students and the ways in which your teacher preparation program influences that work. We will begin by taking a few moments to silently jot down thoughts, memories, and/or ideas that come to your mind regarding your teacher preparation program and your vision and work as a teacher. As you complete that task, feel free to get up and begin placing your cards on the board, forming clusters as categories. Once all of the cards are place, we will discuss the categories and thoughts that you have generated. Please know that there are no right or wrong answers. I want you to feel comfortable sharing positive viewpoints as well as critical perspectives. I am not here to promote a particular perspective. You also do not have to agree with everyone in the group if that's not how you really feel. I will use the information from today's discussion to explore the ways our teacher graduates enact and sustain their visions for teaching. I am recording the focus group so that I can accurately capture your ideas for analysis and next steps. If during the focus group interview you decide that there is something you would like to tell me privately, then please jot down your thought and send it to me by email (kbarker3@gsu.edu) or call me [phone number]. I ask that you talk one at a time so that I can be sure to hear everyone's views and get them on tape. When you say something, please say your first name so that the person transcribing the tape will know who is talking. You can say something like, "This is Molly". Does anyone have any questions before we begin?	
These questions will be based on the ideas generated by the group.	To understand ways in which teacher graduates envision their work as teachers.
These questions will be based on the ideas generated by the group.	To understand how teacher graduates enact their visions for their work.
These questions will be based on the ideas generated by the group.	To understand how teacher graduates sustain their visions for themselves as teachers.
Are there are any other ideas or thoughts that you would like to share? Thank you for your ideas. Feel free to email me if you have any other thoughts you would like to share.	

Appendix J

FINAL FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

<table>
<tr><th>Effective Teachers as Advocates End-of-Year - May 2015</th><th>Purpose of the questions</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Introduction: Good morning everyone. Thank you for participating in this focus group. I am interested in understanding your work as advocates for your students during end-of-year activities. I am going to ask a few questions in these areas.

Please know that there are no right or wrong answers. I want you to feel comfortable sharing positive viewpoints as well as critical perspectives. I am not here to promote a particular perspective. You also do not have to agree with everyone in the group if that's not how you really feel. I will use the information from today's discussion to explore the ways our teacher graduates enact and sustain their visions for teaching.

I am recording the focus group so that I can accurately capture your ideas for analysis and next steps. If during the focus group interview you decide that there is something you would like to tell me privately, then please jot down your thought and send it to me by email (kbarker3@gsu.edu) or call me [phone number].

I ask that you talk one at a time so that I can be sure to hear everyone's views and get them on tape. When you say something, please say your first name so that the person transcribing the tape will know who is talking. You can say something like, "This is Molly".

Does anyone have any questions before we begin?</td></tr>
<tr><td>Describe instances during end-of-year activities where you felt the need to advocate for your students.
1. How do you feel about the ways in which you advocated?
2. Are these situations typical in your school context? How?
3. How do you feel that your efforts made a difference for your students?
4. What resulted from the act(s) of advocacy? Describe any follow-up consequences.</td><td>To understand ways in which teacher graduates enact their visions for teaching.</td></tr>
<tr><td>5. Describe any reactions to the ways in which you advocated for your students. (faculty, administration, staff, and/or parents)
a. How do you feel about these reactions?
b. How do these reactions influence your future actions on behalf of your students?</td><td>To understand how teacher graduates sustain their visions for their work.</td></tr>
<tr><td>6. If you could approach these situations differently, what would you do?
7. Are there ways in which you wish you had done more or less in these situations?
8. How did these situations compare with your early vision for your work as a teacher? You current vision?</td><td>To understand how teacher graduates practices as advocates aligns with their visions for themselves as teachers.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Are there are any other ideas or thoughts that you would like to share? Thank you for your ideas. Feel free to email me if you have any other thoughts you would like to share.</td></tr>
</table>

Appendix K

CODE MAPPING

THIRD ITERATION: THEMATIC CODING				
Active Caring	**Believing the Best**		**Teaching beyond Boundaries**	
SECOND ITERATION: COLLAPSED CODES				
Care	Believe in abilities and success for all	Knowledgeable	Lifelong Learning	Bridging Gaps
FIRST ITERATION: INITIAL CODES				
-Empathy -Physical -Sharing of personal life -Protecting students' time -Attentiveness to students -Classroom management -Trusting students -Cohesive classroom -Care beyond classroom -Respect dignity, privacy, and intellect -Know students and their families	-Using resources and supports -Being realistic -Expecting and preparing students to advocate at home -Teaching academic agency -Incorporate higher-level thinking -Standardized tests as opportunities -Classroom management	-Wealth of Knowledge-strategies	-Think of an educated future -Knows families -Lifelong learning -Teaching is a journey -Lifelong learner-modeling -Life skills beyond classroom	-Bridging gap between home and school -Bridging gap from one grade to the next

Appendix L

Data Sources and Analytical Procedures

Data source	Purpose	My Analysis	Peer Debriefer	Member Checking Processes
Program-related artifacts: Application goals statements, Interview notes, Interview writing samples, Course documents and assignments	This document analysis provided background information related to the program at the time when the students were enrolled and built a knowledge base of the participants' beliefs prior to their participation in the UACM program.	Reviewed program documents and coded documents for each individual participant.	Reviewed data collection and coding of program-related artifacts.	Presented the analysis of these artifacts and documents when the participants reviewed their individual findings sections. All participants had the opportunity to clarify, change, or remove information.
Capstone Projects: Participant-created movies addressing instances of advocacy and within their first years as teachers of record.	This artifact provided a visual record of the participants' early visions for their work as advocates for their students and examples of that work during their first year of teaching.	Previewed the videos prior to the first interview as a source of background information. Coded for each participant.	Peer debriefer did not view due to confidentiality of the participants.	The participants viewed the videos during the first interview. We discussed my initial analysis, and they had the opportunity to clarify, correct, and elaborate on my analysis.
Initial Interview:	Participant and researcher met and became acquainted.	Listened to each interview to confirm transcription and three additional	Peer debriefer reviewed all transcripts, coding, and analytical	Emailed the transcriptions of the individual interviews to the participants for their

Capstone Projects Participant-selected artifacts	Watched capstone projects together and discussed initial analysis. Participant explained the relationship of the self-selected artifacts to their work as advocates for their students.	times throughout analysis and writing of findings. Initial coding followed by focused coding to collapsing codes into themes.	notes and memos.	corrections/ clarifications.
First School Observation: Full-day, scheduled with participant	To understand the participants' classroom and school context and to observe them in action with their students and in their school environment for a full school day.	Typed up all field notes within 48 hours of the observations if the notes were not typed directly on the computer. Clarified any questions with each participant immediately following the observation. Initial coding followed by focused coding to collapsing codes into themes.	Peer debriefer reviewed all field notes, coding, and analytical notes and memos.	I will meet with the participant for a post-observation check-in for any quick clarifications. Also, I will follow up on the previous interview if the participant has not responded.
Second Interview: Scheduled after full-day observation	To discuss the participants' full-day observation: context, interactions, and thoughts.	Listened to each interview to confirm transcription and three additional times throughout analysis and writing of findings. Initial coding followed by focused coding to collapsing codes into themes.	Peer debriefer reviewed all transcripts, coding, and analytical notes and memos.	Emailed the transcriptions of the individual interviews to the participants for their corrections/ clarifications.
Second School	To understand	Typed up all field	Peer debriefer	I will meet with the

Observation: An event selected and scheduled by the participant	the participants' work as an advocate for diverse students and to observe them in action with their students and in their school environment. This may be a school-related event that the participant selects that occurs outside of the classroom.	notes within 48 hours of the observations if the notes were not typed directly on the computer. Clarified any questions with each participant immediately following the observation. Initial coding followed by focused coding to collapsing codes into themes.	reviewed all transcripts, coding, and analytical notes and memos.	participant for pre- and post-observation check-ins for any quick clarifications. Also, I will follow up on the previous interview if the participant has not responded.
Third School Observation: An event selected and scheduled by the participant	To understand the participants' work as an advocate for diverse students and to observe them in action with their students and in their school environment. This may be a school-related event that the participant selects that occurs outside of the classroom.	Typed up all field notes within 48 hours of the observations if the notes were not typed directly on the computer. Clarified any questions with each participant immediately following the observation. Initial coding followed by focused coding to collapsing codes into themes.	Peer debriefer reviewed all transcripts, coding, and analytical notes and memos.	I will meet with the participant for pre- and post-observation check-ins for any quick clarifications.
Final Interview Scheduled after third school observation	To discuss the participants' two school-related observations: context, interactions,	Listened to each interview to confirm transcription and three additional times throughout analysis and writing	Peer debriefer reviewed all transcripts, coding, and analytical notes and memos.	Emailed the transcriptions of the individual interviews to the participants for their corrections/ clarifications..

	and thoughts.	of findings. Initial coding followed by focused coding to collapsing codes into themes.		
First Focus Group: Conducted and recorded on eLuminate after the conclusion of spring testing	To discuss instances of advocacy that may have occurred, particularly in the context of spring testing.	Listened to each interview to confirm transcription and three additional times throughout analysis and writing of findings. Initial coding followed by focused coding to collapsing codes into themes.	Peer debriefer reviewed all transcripts, coding, and analytical notes and memos.	Emailed the transcriptions of the participants' focus group discussions for their corrections/ clarifications
Second Focus Group: Conducted and recorded on eLuminate near the end-of-year activities	To discuss instances of advocacy that may have occurred, particularly in the context of end-of-year activities, both academic and social.	Listened to each interview to confirm transcription and three additional times throughout analysis and writing of findings. Initial coding followed by focused coding to collapsing codes into themes.	Peer debriefer reviewed all transcripts, coding, and analytical notes and memos.	Emailed the transcriptions of the participants' focus group discussions for their corrections/ clarifications
Third Focus Group: Conducted after the post-planning is concluded	To view artifacts from the UITP program and to generate individual memories related to the UITP program before creating categories as a whole group. Discussing initial findings from the cross-case analysis.	Listened to each interview to confirm transcription and three additional times throughout analysis and writing of findings. Initial coding followed by focused coding to collapsing codes into themes.	Peer debriefer reviewed all transcripts, coding, and analytical notes and memos.	Presented initial findings of the cross case analysis for corrections, clarification, and comments.
Researcher	To gather all	Reviewed notes as I	Peer debriefer	The analysis will be

Reflexive Journal: Case study protocol Field Notes Analytical Memos	documents related to the study. This resource is a data source and will serve as a tool for peer debriefing and dependability audit.	completed analysis for each participant and again during cross case analysis.	reviewed reflexive journal along with all transcripts, coding, and notes and analytical memos.	presented to the participants at each step of data collections.